SPECIMENS OF HAWAIIAN KAPA

assembled from various institutions and private collections

by

D.R. Severson

Copy No. 28

The following pages are a digitized version of Copy No. 28 of "Specimens of Hawaiian Kapa," a collection of kapa samples compiled by D.R. Severson. This collection was purchased from Joseph Rhea of Blue Sky Rare Books (located in Palm Springs, California) by myself, Avalon Paradea, in January 2020, with the goal of donating the collection to the University of Hawai‘i at Hilo. This effort was accomplished thanks to a huge amount of support, financial and otherwise, from the local community. The collection was donated to the UH Hilo Mo‘okini Library on February 27, 2020, where it is now housed in the Hawaiian Collection. This is one of only three copies of this collection known to exist within the Hawaiian Islands, and the only one on Hawai‘i island. The other two are located on O‘ahu. Copy 20 is housed at the University of Hawai‘i at Mānoa at Hamilton Library, while Copy 28 is located at the Hawai‘i State Public Library in Honolulu.

I photographed each page of the collection at my home in January of 2020. Photos were taken with an Olympus TG-4 camera. Most pictures were taken with the "documents" setting, to preserve texture and brightness. In some cases, photos were taken with the "cuisine" setting to preserve saturation. Detailed images were captured with the "microscope" setting. In most cases, the final photo of each kapa swatch is of the backside of the piece, gently lifted in order to see the kākau wai (watermarks) hidden within their fibers.

For any who have received this digital copy, feel free to disseminate as you see fit. Many emotions arose in my heart while gazing upon the kapa specimens herein, which were cut from much larger pieces in order to make 95 copies of this book. I did my best to come away with a positive feeling, and I have gained an even deeper appreciation for kapa and the many hands that made (and continue to create) it. This book and the kapa swatches within were compiled to make kapa more accessible to researchers, scholars, and practitioners; let us see that it serves its purpose. It takes community kuleana to remember the past and perpetuate cultural practices into the future. Let us make sure the hard work, the ingenuity, the dedication, and the love put into these kapa is never forgotten. E ola kapa!

And most importantly – mahalo nui loa to every single person who helped bring this collection home! Every generous soul who donated to the fundraiser, shared the information with others, or sent pule made this dream a reality. This was a community effort on every level, and therefore this collection very much belongs to the community. I hope each of you get the chance to visit the kapa in-person at Mo‘okini Library one day.

HAWAIIAN

KAPA

SEVERSON

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VOLUME I

in a Series on Bark Cloth

HAWAII

1978

ANNOUNCEMENT

KAPA, the bark cloth of Polynesia (commonly referred to as *tapa* in English but as *kapa* in Hawaiian), reached the height of its artistic development in old Hawaii. It was the product of a variety of the *morus papyrifera*, made by soaking raw plant bast in sea water and beating it on stone into long wide strips which were then bleached in the sun. In a secondary beating process the cloth was impressed with a watermark pattern and dyed or painted in a variety of colors and designs. Kapa was a utilitarian fabric used principally for ordinary clothing, the loin cloth and the skirt, but it had additional uses in sheets and blankets and bandages, as well as in winding sheets for the dead. Kapa was replaced by other fabrics over a century ago, but some pieces, because of their quality, were socially and spiritually significant artifacts that were treasured as heirlooms.

With the westernization of Hawaii and the decimation of the Hawaiian peoples, the making of kapa all but disappeared, rendered impractical by the introduction of woven and machine printed fabrics. By 1850 kapa was becoming scarce and it was somewhat unusual to see it worn. Some say the last true kapa was made in the 1870s. Today Hawaiian kapa making as a living craft and artistic tradition is extinct. Fortunately some explorers, missionaries and naturalists collected and cared for rare examples of 18th and 19th century kapa. Today major institutions in the Hawaiian Islands and elsewhere include fine specimens of Polynesian kapa in their collections. However, except for the few on public display, most kapa remain in storage or in study collections accessible only to professional scholars and researchers. In the past a few compilations of Hawaiian kapa have been assembled and bound. In all, perhaps less than forty books of this sort—containing actual Hawaiian kapa with verified provenance—exist in the world's private and institutional collections.

A series of unusual opportunities enabled Mr. Severson to gather the range of historical, museum-quality kapa assembled in this book. Nineteen examples dating from around 1820 had been collected by some of the first Christian missionaries to visit Hawaii and held by the American Board of Commission-

ers for Foreign Missions. Late in the nineteenth century these kapa were presented to Amherst College, where the collection remained until it was acquired by an East Coast antiquarian dealer early in the 1970s. Subsequently the A.B.C.F.M./Amherst kapa were purchased by the editor in 1976. In 1977 the auction sale in London of Hawaiian and Maori art from the James Hooper Collection provided additional Hawaiian kapa with important provenance. Acquired at the Hooper sale were kapa collected by the Bloxam brothers during the 1825 voyage of H.M.S. *Blonde* and kapa taken to England in 1865 by Hawaii's Queen Emma, as well as other kapa collected by early voyagers to Hawaii. Also represented in this book are kapa from prominent private collections in Polynesia, including specimens from the Mack, Martin, Ostheimer and Severson collections of Polynesian artifacts.

Scholars consider kapa the highest achievement of Polynesian culture, attaining its zenith in Hawaii. Given the rarity and value of the examples offered here, together with the informative essay and historical notes, this portfolio makes a significant contribution to the study of bark cloth in the history of papermaking. The decision to cut up the sheets of kapa into specimens was made after careful examination of the material determined that its damaged and deteriorated condition warranted subdivision for the benefit of a wider audience.

The book has been made to facilitate study and display. Institutions and collectors alike will appreciate the curatorial qualities of the portfolio which insure the longevity of the kapa specimens and provide for ease of exhibition. The contents of the portfolio are in two parts. The introduction and historical notes are printed as a separate booklet. The samples of kapa are mounted in individual folders imprinted with identification and provenance. Contained in the folders are plates of photographs of the full sheets of kapa intact, before they were cut into specimen pieces, showing the shape and pattern. Only those burial specimens too fragmented for meaningful photographic reproduction are not shown.

ANNOUNCEMENT

Specimens of Hawaiian Kapa has been designed and produced by Andrew Hoyem of San Francisco. The paper is Italian handmade Roma, from Fabriano, the oldest existing European paper mill, tan in color with a page size of 9½ by 13 inches. The type is 18 point Centaur, printed by letterpress. The text and specimen volumes are each contained in dark brown Roma wrappers. The same paper is used to cover and line the portfolio boards and cloth-hinged flaps. The spine of the binding is brown goat leather with the title stamped in gold.

The edition is limited to 95 copies, each containing an inventory sheet listing specimens contained in each numbered book and signed by the editor. Specimens in Books 1 through 50 are divided into nine parts according to their sources; Books 51 through 95 are in five parts and do not contain Parts II, IV, VII and IX. The following is a breakdown of numbered copies and their contents:

Books numbered	*Specimens contained*	*Price*
1 through 12	33	$1500
13 through 33	27	1400
34 through 50	26	1400
51 through 75	15	1200
76 through 80	14	1000
81 through 85	11	1000
86 through 95	10	1000

Note: Because of the limitation in the amount of kapa available for this work, specimens vary in size and quality in each book.

Institutions and individuals with suitable references may receive a copy on approval. Residents of Hawaii should add 4% sales tax to the retail price of the book. To be included in the printed subscriber list, please submit payment in full before December 31, 1978. Address orders to Hawaiian Antiquities, Inc., 1020 Auahi Street, Honolulu, Hawaii 96814.

Projected for 1980: Volume II in this series, *Specimens of Polynesian Tapa.*

HAWAIIAN KAPA

Specimens of Hawaiian

KAPA

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D. R. SEVERSON

VOLUME I

in a Series on Bark Cloth

HAWAII

1979

Of an edition limited to 95 copies,

this is copy No. 28

containing 27 *kapa samples.*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & DEDICATION

I wish to acknowledge the assistance and counsel received from
Dr. Adrienne Kaeppler, Leonard Lueras, Irving Jenkins,
Rubellite K. Johnson, David Forbes
and the librarians at the Mission Houses Museum
in the production of this work;

and I wish to dedicate it to my wife
Betty Lou Prigge Severson
and our son Brandon.

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Mr. & Mrs. Gaylord Wilcox, Hanalei, Hawaii

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Mr. & Mrs. Gaylord Wilcox, Hanalei, Hawaii

SPECIMENS

Part I Kapa sent to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions by Hawaiian missionaries.

II Kapa taken to England by Queen Emma in 1865.

III Kapa presented the Saffron Walden Museum, England by Mr. Edmond Murphelley.

IV Kapa collected by Captain James Roberts.

V Kapa collected by the Bloxam Brothers Voyage of H.M.S. *Blonde*.

VI Kapa from the Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Ostheimer Collection, Honolulu.

VII Kapa from the Watters Mahiole Martin Collection, Honolulu.

VIII Kapa from the Severson Collection, Honolulu.

IX Kapa fragments from burial caves, Kona Coast, Hawaii.

INTRODUCTION

KAPA, the bark cloth of Polynesia (commonly referred to as *tapa* in English but as *kapa* in Hawaiian), reached the height of its artistic development in old Hawaii, then declined and disappeared with the westernization of the oceanic islands. A series of unusual opportunities enabled the editor to gather the range of historic kapa assembled in this book.

The kapa which previously belonged to the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (referred to hereafter as the A.B.C.F.M.) were collected by some of the first Christian missionaries to arrive at Hawaii. These A.B.C.F.M. kapa were presented to Amherst College late in the nineteenth century, where the collection remained until the 1970s when it was acquired by an East Coast antiquarian dealer. Subsequently the A.B.C.F.M./Amherst kapa were purchased by the editor in 1976.

The A.B.C.F.M. kapa had been carefully catalogued and numbered by their early missionary collectors, and this information was passed on to Amherst College. Unfortunately, these records were destroyed by a fire on the Amherst campus in the 1880s. Attempts to find duplicates of these records have not yet been successful.

In 1977 the auction sale of Hawaiian and Maori art from the James Hooper Collection provided additional Hawaiian kapa with important provenance. Acquired at the Hooper sale were kapa collected by the Bloxam brothers during the 1825 voyage of H.M.S. *Blonde*, kapa taken to England in 1865 by Hawaii's Queen Emma, and other kapa collected by early voyagers to Hawaii. This book also contains kapa from eminent private collections in Polynesia, including specimens from the Mack, Martin, Ostheimer, and Severson collections of Polynesian artifacts.

Today major institutions in the Hawaiian Islands and elsewhere include

fine examples of Polynesian kapa in their collections. However, except for a few on public display, most kapa remain in storage or in study collections accessible only to professional scholars and researchers. Therefore, this edition makes available to a wider public fine specimens of the genre.

A few such compilations were made in the past, but today they have become extremely rare. These include:

A Catalogue of the Different Specimens of Cloth Collected in the Three Voyages of Captain Cook, compiled by Alexander Shaw in 1787, eight years after Cook's death in Hawaii. The format is octavo and the original number of copies unknown. Included are 39 specimens of bark cloth: one from Jamaica, one from the Friendly Islands, three from New Amsterdam; fourteen from the Sandwich Islands (or Owyhee) and twenty from Otaheite (Tahiti). As Shaw's title page states, this earliest known book of kapa includes in addition its "particular account of the manner of the Manufacturing [of] the same in the various islands of the South Seas; partly extracted from Mr. Anderson and Reinhold Forster's Observations, And the verbal Account of some of the most knowing of the Navigators; with some anecdotes that happened to them among the natives." Kapa specimens differ somewhat in each known Shaw book.

Hawaiian Kapa from the Collection in the Bernice Pauahi Bishop Museum of Ethnology and Natural History, a quarto produced by William T. Brigham about 1893. Brigham, the first director of the Bishop Museum, included more than 100 specimens in each book. To date only two copies have been identified: one at the Peabody Museum, Salem, Massachusetts, and a second in the Bishop Museum, Honolulu. There is speculation that a third copy exists.

Hawaiian Tapa, an octavo produced by Julius S. Rodman during the 1930s. There are seven known copies of this book containing approximately 100 kapa specimens. The Rodman kapa reportedly came from burial caves located on the Von Holt cattle ranch on Hawaii.

In all, perhaps less than 40 books of this sort, containing actual Hawaiian kapa with verified provenance, exist in the world's private and institutional collections. The editor hopes that the present effort will provide a valuable tool for future research.

In this collection of specimens, when the provenance of a particular piece is available, it is recounted in detail. When its history is unknown, the age is estimated. In all cases utmost care has been taken to properly date and establish the origin of each piece. Before the bark cloth was sectioned into specimens, each kapa was photographed in its surviving state (in some cases as a ragged fragment of the original) to ensure a fully documented overview of each specimen. It has been the editor's concern that these surviving kapa pieces be properly preserved and catalogued in this volume. After decades of exposure to sunlight, humidity and insects, their fragile condition presents unique storage problems which makes placement of them into book form an attractive and enduring solution to their presentation and conservation. In this format the kapa should remain intact as an inspiration to many future generations of scholars and those interested in ancient Hawaiian culture.

D. R. S.

HISTORICAL NOTES

'O KE KAPA HO'OMAIKA'I LOA A 'OI ANA MAMUA O KE A'IA'I O KA MAHINA KA HUALI A ME NA HAUKEA O NA MAUNA.
Well-made tapa must be clearer than moonlight; clearer than snow on the mountains.[1]

ONCE raw plant bast had gone through the *ho'omo'omo'o,* or moulding process (whereby it was soaked in sea water, beaten on stone anvils into long and wide strips of bark cloth, then bleached in the sun), it did indeed glow white like the light of a tropical moon. But following that stage of its manufacture, these soft and dry sheets of bark cloth (commonly referred to in English as *tapa* but in Hawaiian as *kapa*) were still as blank canvases awaiting an artist's impressions. Onto these organic fabrics the kapa artists of old Hawaii added more subtle aspects: first came the secondary beating process, known as the *kuku,* during which a geometric watermark pattern was impressed into the cloth; then depending on the kapa artist's fancy, she dyed it in any of a rainbow range of colors and/or hand-painted, color-overlayed, cord-snapped, block-printed or stamped it with any of hundreds of designs favored by Polynesian craftswomen.

Some Pacific scholars claim that Hawaiian kapa represent the zenith of artistic achievement in ancient Polynesia, but whether or not their hypothesis is true, one can easily understand why these fabrics inspired the following comments:

Their cloth is made of the same materials, and in the same manner, as at the Friendly and Society Islands. That which is designed to be painted, is of a thick and strong texture, several folds being beat and incorporated together; after which it is cut into breadths, about two

[1]Samuel Manaiakalani Kamakau, *Ke Au O'ko'a* (*Hawaiian Language Newspaper*), January 27, 1870, quoted in *Na Hana a ka Po'e Kahiko. The Works of the People of Old,* Bishop Museum Press (Honolulu, 1976). —native Hawaiian historian Kamakau, commenting on *ho'omo'omo'o,* the first beating or preparatory step in Hawaiian kapa making.

or three feet wide, and is painted in a variety of patterns, with a comprehensiveness and regularity of design, that bespeaks infinite taste and fancy. The exactness with which the most intricate patterns are continued, is the most surprising, when we consider, that they have no stamps, and that the whole is done by eye, with pieces of bamboo cane dipped in paint; the hand being supported by another piece of cane, in the same manner practiced by our painters.[2]

The Reverend William Ellis also gave a complimentary assessment of the craft as early as 1823:

The tapa in general lasts but a little while, compared with any kind of wove cloth, yet, if kept free from wet, which causes it to rend like paper, some kinds may be worn a considerable time. The fabrication of it shews both invention and industry; and whether we consider its different textures, its varied and regular patterns, its beautiful colours, so admirably preserved by means of the varnish, we are at once convinced, that the people who manufacture it are neither deficient in taste, nor incapable of receiving the improvements of civilized society.[3]

In numerous other first-hand accounts of Hawaiian kapa-making the authors often emphasized that kapa manufacture, and the finished kapa, represented much more than a quaint native craft for the creation of utilitarian fabrics pleasing to the eye; the kapa were also socially and spiritually significant artifacts, which, depending on their quality, were cared for as heirlooms. The British sea captains Cook and King pointed out the kapa's special importance to Hawaiians in many passages in *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean*. One of the first such references is a description of a "pyramidal" religious structure on the northern Hawaiian island of Kauai. This temple, which Cook identi-

[2]James Cook and James King, *A Voyage to the Pacific Ocean . . . for making discoveries in the Northern Hemisphere in . . . "Resolution" and "Discovery"* (London, 1784), III:148.
[3]William Ellis, *Polynesian Researches During a Residence of Nearly Eight Years in the Society and Sandwich Islands* (New York, 1833), IV:86-89.

fied as a "burying ground, or 'morai,' " was draped with kapa, and as Cook notes in a journal entry dated January, 1778:

It seemed to be rather in a ruinous state; but there were sufficient remaining marks, to shew, that it had originally been covered with a thin, light, grey cloth; which these people, it should seem, consecrate to religious purposes, as we could see a good deal of it hanging in different parts of the 'morai'; and some of it had been forced upon me when I first landed. On the farther side of the area of the 'morai' stood a house or shed. . . . On the farther side of this house, opposite the entrance, stood two wooden images . . . and both of them had pieces of cloth, tied about the loins, and hanging a considerable way down.[4]

Cook and King's impressions, the first by *haoles,* or outsiders, regarding Hawaiian kapa and its uses were notable not only because they were the first, but also because they paid strict attention to cultural detail. Their accounts describe the Hawaiian *maro,* or male loincloth, "which they pass between the legs, and tie round the waist," as well as the *pāʻū,* the female's skirt, which was "made of the thinnest and finest sort of cloth, wrapt several times round the waist, and descending to the leg; so as to have exactly the appearance of a full short petticoat." And they noticed that the Hawaiians' "plantations consist of the tarrow or eddy root, and the sweet potatoe, with plants of the cloth-tree neatly set out in rows." Indeed, Cook offered the following as the first art critique on Hawaiian kapa:

In every thing manufactured by these people, there appears to be an uncommon degree of neatness and ingenuity. Their cloth, which is the principal manufacture, is made from the 'morus papyrifera'; and, doubtless, in the same manner as of Otahite and Tongataboo; for we bought some of the grooved sticks, with which it is beaten. Its texture, however, though thicker, is rather inferior to that of the cloth of either of the other places; but, in colouring or staining it, the people of Atooi [Kauai] *display a superiority of taste, by the endless vari-*

[4]Cook and King, *Voyage to the Pacific Ocean,* II:201-202.

ations of figures which they execute. One would suppose, on seeing a number of their pieces, that they had borrowed their patterns from some mercers shop, in which the most elegant productions of China and Europe are collected; besides some original patterns of their own. Their colours, indeed, except the red, are not very bright; but the regularity of the figures and stripes is truly surprising; for, as far as we knew, they have nothing like stamps or prints, to make the impressions. In what manner they produce their colours, we had not the opportunities of learning; but besides the party-coloured sorts, they have some pieces of plain white cloth, and others of a single colour, particularly dark brown and light blue. In general, the pieces which they brought to us, were about two feet broad, and four or five yards long, being the form and quantity that they use for their common dress, or 'maro'; and even these we sometimes found were composed of pieces sewed together; an art which we did not find to the southward, but is strongly, though not very neatly, performed here. There is also a particular sort that is thin, much resembling oil-cloth, and which is actually either oiled or soaked in some kind of varnish, and seems to resist the action of the water pretty well.[5]

King relates that Cook, who was venerated by the Hawaiians as a god, was often visited by Hawaiian priests who would drape lengths of red cloth about his shoulders. "This ceremony," King wrote, "was frequently repeated during our stay at Owhyee, and appeared to us . . . from many circumstances, to be a sort of religious adoration. Their idols we found always arrayed with red cloth, in the same manner as was done to Captain Cook." King also observed that a royal tribute (to a Hawaiian king and Cook) included parcels of cloth, quantities of red and yellow feathers, hatchets and iron-ware ("that had been got in barter from us"), live hogs and various vegetables.

But perhaps the most interesting kapa-related entry is the following:

The business of painting belongs entirely to the women, and is called 'kipparee'; and it is remarkable, that they always gave the same name to our writing. The young women would often take the pen out of our hands, and shew us, that they knew the uses of it as well as we

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 237.

did; at the same time telling us, that our pens were not as good as theirs. They looked upon a sheet of written paper, as a piece of cloth striped after the fashion of our country; and it was not without the utmost difficulty that we could make them understand, that our figures had a meaning in them which theirs had not.[6]

Since King and Cook recorded their on-the-spot kapa observations, numerous scholarly treatises which detail and dissect kapa-making techniques, designs and the implements used in manufacturing bark cloth have been published in Hawaii and abroad. (See references cited in the bibliography.) Perhaps the most intriguing works regarding kapa are those which give the reader an insight into the role which kapa played in day-to-day Polynesian life. Shaw, for example, writing of specimens collected during Cook's Pacific voyages, recounts the following poignant story of a length of kapa acquired at Tahiti:

From Otaheite, wore as garments by the ladies.—A number of the natives being on board of the Resolution, *one of the chiefs took a particular liking to an old blunt iron, which lay upon one of the officer's chests, and taking hold of a boy about nine years of age, offered him in exchange, pointing to the iron. The gentleman, although he knew he could not keep the youth, yet willing to see if he would willingly stay; or if any of the rest would claim him, took the child and gave the savage the iron; upon which a woman, who appeared rather young for the mother, sprung from the other side of the ship, and with the highest emotions of grief seemed to bewail the loss of the infant; but the lieutenant, with a true British spirit, took him by the hand and presented him to her, upon which, after putting her hands twice upon her head, she unbound the roll of cloth which was round her body, and from which this specimen was cut, and having spread it before him, seized the boy, and jumping into the sea both swam ashore, nor could he ever learn whether she was the mother, sister, or relation, and this he lamented the more, as such affection was very seldom seen among these people.*[7]

[6] *Ibid.*, III, p. 148.

[7] Alexander Shaw, *A Catalogue of the Different Specimens of Cloth Collected in the Three Voyages of Captain Cook* (London, 1787), p. 8.

Kamakau, the eminent Hawaiian historian, notes that the kapa makers of Hawaii always did their work under the guidance of an *ʻaumakua*, or spiritual ally, in areas specially consecrated and designated for kapa-making. In a chapter of his book entitled "Aumakua of the Tapa Makers," he names the Hawaiian woman Lauhuki as the key personage or personal god venerated by kapa makers.

The expert beaters of tapa remembered the goodness of the god in giving skill and wisdom to the woman Lauhuki in her seeking to make tapa out of the barks of trees. This woman became an ʻaumakua *for those experts. Hence the house in which kapa was beaten was made* kapu (*placed under ritual restrictions for the work*). *Those who beat tapa according to their own ways* (*without* kapu) *found that the* wauke (*the paper mulberry,* Brousonetia papyrifera) *they wetted rotted and turned bad.*

The expert women who knew the art of stamping and printing designs venerated Laʻahana, the woman of ancient times (*and sister of Lauhuki*) *who originated the art. Ehu, who was the originator of ribbed tapa,* kuaʻula, *became the male* ʻaumakua *for those who colored* kuaʻula, hamoʻula, wailiʻiliʻi, uʻauʻa *and such tapas.*[8]

Such preoccupations with spirituality made for remarkable artistry in kapa-making and other Hawaiian cultural pursuits. Based on research at the Bishop Museum, Adrienne Kaeppler recently wrote that Hawaiian kapa of the 19th century achieved extraordinary levels of refinement and motif elaboration—partly because of the introduction of western tools and other technology, but also because Hawaiians "typically took great delight" in executing works of extreme artistic subtlety.

It seems safe to conclude that Hawaiians quickly recognized the usefulness of metal tools and adopted them to carving stamps on bamboo strips that they had previously used mainly

[8]Kamakau, *The Works of the People of Old,* p. 116.

as pens. This resulted in an elaboration and refinement of their traditional motifs and techniques.

With new, more elaborate printing tools available, Hawaiian women evolved the new concepts of design organization outlined above and they elaborated them in yet other ways. Small design motifs from bamboo stamps were sometimes used to 'fill in' larger designs giving yet another, less obvious, dimension to the complete decoration. Only seldom do we find flat two-dimensionality without subtle, hidden dimensions in which Hawaiians typically took great delight. Just as in Hawaiian poetry, music, and dance, where levels of meaning were hidden in seemingly straightforward artistry, so the kapa *maker hid some of her designs from first sight. For example, the immediate impression of the* kapa *depicted . . . is that of a repetitious design of large triangles, three of which combine into a larger form, on a blue background. On closer examination one finds that each of the three triangles that make up one design is filled in with different small motifs. And furthermore, the watermark impressed from the beater is visible only when held to the light.* Kaona, *hidden meaning, is expressed with classic Hawaiian subtlety. Overall designs . . . find their subtlety in placement, color, and watermark, but the* piece de resistance *of the Hawaiian artistic genius in two-dimensional design was surely the creation of motifs out of negative space, particularly in designs created from unprinted parts of the cloth. Here one simple stamp is printed over and over to form the 'background,' while the design is formed from the unprinted parts of the cloth, or the negative space between the stamps.*[9]

Kaeppler also relates that Hawaiians were so good at recreating a favorite design motif, even from non-Polynesian sources, that people mistook kapa for calico cloth or other fabrics introduced by New England missionary wives. Charles Wilkes, who led a naval expedition to Hawaii during the 1840s, comments on the reaction of outsiders to the authenticity of the design reproduction.

They were all much struck with the dress of the native women, its unusual neatness and

[9]Adrienne Kaeppler, *The Fabrics of Hawaii (Bark Cloth)* (Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, England, 1975), I:14-15.

becoming appearance. It seemed remarkable that so many of them should be clothed in foreign manufacture, and that apparently of an expensive kind; but on closer examination, the dresses proved to be tapas, printed in imitation of merino shawls, ribands, etc.[10]

Actual kapa-making sessions were not unlike present day sewing circles or quilting bees, judging by such reports as this one by the peripatetic Reverend Ellis:

For several days past we have observed many of the people bringing home from their plantations bundles of young wauti (*a variety of the* morus papyrifera), *from which we infer that this is the season for cloth-making in this part of the island.*

This morning, the 17th, we perceived Keoua, the governor's wife, and her female attendants, with about forty other women, under the pleasant shade of a beautiful clump of cordia or kou trees, employed in stripping off the bark from bundles of wauti sticks, for the purpose of making it into cloth. The sticks were generally from six to ten feet long, and about an inch in diameter at the thickest end. They first cut the bark, the whole length of the stick, with a sharp serrated shell, and having carefully peeled it off, rolled it into small coils, the inner bark being outside. In this state it is left some time, to make it flat and smooth. Keoua not only worked herself, but appeared to take the superintendance of the whole party. Whenever a fine piece of bark was found, it was shewn to her, and put aside to be manufactured into wairiirii, *or some other particular cloth. With lively chat and cheerful song, they appeared to beguile the hours of labour until noon, when having finished their work, they repaired to their dwellings.*[11]

Other missionary-travelers, Reverend Daniel Tyerman and George Bennett, happened across this smaller but similar kapa-making scene at Wailua on the island of Oahu during the 1820s:

[10]Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition, During the Years 1838-42* (Philadelphia, 1845), IV: 71-72.
[11]William Ellis, *A Journal of a Tour Around Hawaii the Largest of the Sandwich Islands* (Boston, 1825), pp. 60-61.

At one place, in the house of a chief where we were hospitably entertained, we had an opportunity of witnessing the method of printing flowers and other ornamental figures on the native cloth. Four women were industriously employed in this work. The design is neatly engraved upon the sides of thin pieces of bamboo, into the lines of which the colours are introduced by dipping them into the calabashes (cocoa-nut shells) containing the die in a liquid state, and the superfluous matter is thrown off from the smooth surface by striking the bamboo smartly upon the edge of these vessels. The pattern is then carefully transferred to the cloth by pressure of the hand; after which, with the fibre of cocoa-husk dipped in the colouring matter, any imperfections are supplied, and the whole is delicately finished off. This work is executed with considerable expedition as well as accuracy; and, if not borrowed from the suggestion of European visitors (which is hardly probable), it may be said that printing, as well as engraving, are original inventions of the Sandwich islanders, both being used in this ingenious process.[12]

The technique of transferring images onto kapa was also a method of communication when the women workers desired it to be so. According to an account by *kama'āina* Ethel M. Damon on Kauai, the kapa beatings' distinct and rhythmic sound of wooden mallets ringing on wooden anvils carried messages:

Anahola was a distant valley halfway to Hanalei, where the sound of tapa beating could still be heard. Very likely it was on some such expedition as this that young Willie Rice, riding with natives on horseback, heard an unusual rhythm in the beats of the women's tapa mallets. He listened for a moment, seeming to hear it answered, but not echoed, from one side of the valley to the other. Seeing the puzzled look on his face, the Hawaiian with him said, "They are talking." And sure enough, there was a definite, though irregular, rhythm which betrayed the sending of code messages.[13]

[12]Daniel Tyerman and George Bennett, *Journal of Voyages and Travels in the South Sea Islands, China, etc.* (London, 1831), I: 457-458.

[13]Ethel M. Damon, *Koamalu a Story of Pioneers on Kauai and of What They Built in that Island Garden* (Honolulu, 1931), pp. 473-474.

Anthropologist Peter H. Buck, who served as the director of the Bishop Museum from 1936 to 1951, says of the sounds:

Hawaiian anvils were made of various woods, such as kawaʻu, naʻu *and* hualewa. *Kamakau states that the* kawaʻu *gave forth a pleasant sound when beaten and that the* naʻu *and* hualewa *gave out a sharp sound "like the voice of the lele bird." . . . The wood, together with the groove, gave forth a pleasant sound when the tapa was beaten, providing a limited form of Morse signaling. It is said that the presence of visitors could be signaled by relays to the other end of the village by means of tapa anvils.*[14]

Although the utilitarian and spiritual uses of kapa were varied, its principal use was as a material to make the few garments worn by Hawaiians: the man's loin cloth, the *malo*; the woman's skirt, the *pāʻū*; and a shawl-cloak, the *kihei*, worn by both sexes. Also common to most Hawaiian households was the *kapa moe*, or bed kapa, which served as both sheets and blankets. Large *kapa moe* usually required five or more sheets of kapa, which were sewn together at one edge with *olona* fiber or kapa cord. Because of the somewhat unpleasant aroma of new kapa, garments and bedding were often perfumed by sprinkling various seeds, fragrant roots and sweet-smelling oils between the sheets of fabric. Popular Hawaiian aromatics were seeds of the *mokihana* tree (*Pelea anisata*), powdered heart of sandal wood, *ʻiliahi* (*Santalum spp.*), the root stalk of the *ʻawapuhi* plant (commonly referred to as ginger), and flowers of the *kamani* tree (*Calophyllum inophyllum*).

Hawaiian historians E. S. Craighill Handy and Mary Kawena Pukuʻi note that "A good mother, foster-mother or grandparent who raised a child must see to it that each child had as a dowry its own bed coverlet—in the old days a handsome sheet of kapa, in post-missionary days a hand-quilted coverlet of some favoured design." They also quote the following Hawaiian saying: "He keiki no he kapa, he keiki no he kapa—For each child a bed covering." And

[14]Peter H. Buck, *Arts and Crafts of Hawaii* (Honolulu, 1957), p. 180.

they add, "For parents not to make a kapa for each child (in later times a quilt) bespoke laziness."[15]

In addition to its uses for clothing and bedding, kapa served other purposes:

Tapa was used less commonly as arm and leg ornaments of white bands, and orange hued fillets for the hair . . . rather frequent use of bed tapas was made in wrapping for burial the bodies of the dead. For the winding sheets, a special black dye was sometimes made, which caused rapid disintegration of the cloth. . . . [Tapa was also] very serviceable for bandaging wounds; . . . tied to sticks or limbs of trees it stood for signals, kapu signs, and "for sale" signs. Pulled apart it answered as a lint to staunch the flow of blood, or spun into thick cord it made an excellent slow match or fire cord, weluahi. *. . . Before binding the stone adz head to its handle, several small pieces of tapa were often placed between the stone and wood to give a firm grip. Excellent wicks for the stone lamps with their* kukui-nut *oil were twisted from bits of old kapa. . . . Partitions of tapa within the houses were not usually decorated on account of darkness, but upon the open* lanai *pleasing color effects could be secured. Mats of thick-ribbed tapa lay on the floor. . . . In the* heiau, *or places of worship, the oracle tower of light framework had its covering of a coarse sort of white tapa beaten from the bark of the* oloa *shrub. Another use was to finish off the bases of the cylindrical feathered heads of the stately* kahilis. *Temporary sandals occasionally were made of twisted tapa strands.*[16]

One of the most unusual uses of kapa in old Hawaii is recounted by Hawaiian native historian John Papa I'i. Queen Ka'ahumanu, King Kamehameha's favorite wife, took a surfing expedition to the surf of Waliu in Halelua, Kohala, on the east side of the Big Island's Kauhola Point. She was accompanied by a chieftain named Kekakau "who was most skilled in surfing:"

[15]E. S. Craghill Handy and Mary Kawena Pukui, *The Polynesian Family System in Ka'u, Hawaii* (Wellington, New Zealand, 1958), p. 167.
[16]Stanley C. Ball, *Bishop Museum Handbook Part II: Clothing* (Honolulu, 1924), p. 22.

Before they left, Kekakau talked with the king about the nature of the surf and showed Kaahumanu the places to land, which would be signaled by the waving of a white tapa. If the tapa was moved to the right or to the left, she was to go to the side indicated before the sea rose up high and overwhelmed her. If the tapa was spread out, or perhaps wadded into a ball, the signal meant to go in on the middle of the wave. Kekakau told the chiefess to observe the signals on shore while they rode shoreward from the place where the surf rose to the place where the surf rose up high until they landed. Before they started the earth ovens had been lighted for roasting dogs, and by the time they reached shore, the dogs were cooked.[17]

Kapa was often used as a special present, tribute or dowry. In post-contact times, some foreign landowners even accepted kapa as a tax payment, as this excerpt from a letter dated December 13, 1827, from Joseph Goodrich indicates:

Tell Chule to have the remainder of the tax of my land brought in—I should think that 4 tapas more to a man was not out of the way, as my land makai *brought in 5 to a man and Punahoa 1 to a man.*

I wish them to be brought in soon and sent soon by first opportunity as I wish to purchase a trunk or two. Mr. Coombs sails for America by via of Canton with first fair wind in the Triton.[18]

Apparently Mr. Goodrich liked kapa, or well understood its artistic and market value, writing in a subsequent letter from Byron's Bay, Hilo, Hawaii, dated April 16, 1829: "I have put aboard the packet 102 tapas to be at your disposal."[19]

Kapa was esteemed and admired, but with the rapid westernization wrought by Cook and his men, then other explorers, missionaries, whalers, sealers,

[17]John Papa I'i, *Fragments of Hawaiian History* (Honolulu, 1959), p. 134.
[18]Joseph Goodrich, *Letters to Reverend S. Whitney and Samuel Ruggles* (Mission Houses Museum Library Collection, Honolulu).
[19]*Ibid.*

traders, and military ships of many flags, traditional Hawaiian culture and the Hawaiian race itself began to change. First subjected to religious and political upheaval, Hawaii was then exploited by various outside economic interests. These social disturbances along with newly-introduced diseases, alcohol and assorted vices quickly undermined much of Hawaiian culture and the social order as Cook and other explorers knew it. Indeed, within a century after Cook's discovery of Hawaii, the Hawaiian race was decimated, and the familiar, ringing sound of kapa mallets was heard but rarely. Some scholars say the last true Hawaiian kapa was made in isolated Waipio Valley on the Big Island during the 1870s. Peter H. Buck of the Bishop Museum stated in 1957 that kapa "is still made in Samoa and Tonga, [but] its manufacture has ceased completely in Hawaii." In an addendum he says: "However, from Laupahoehoe, Hawaii, comes a record of its manufacture by an old man named Keawe, who made some tapa from *wauke* (paper mulberry) as late as 1923."[20]

But who really knows when the last kapa mallet beat a last watermark into a length of Hawaiian bark cloth? It was evident quite early in the 19th century that kapa-making had been rendered impractical by the introduction of woven and machine-printed fabrics. C. S. Stewart, an early American missionary wrote in 1828:

The best made and colored kapa is little inferior in beauty to most common calicoes and chintzes, but so perishable in its quality, as to be an expensive article of clothing. Some kinds are saturated with the oil of the cocoanut, to make them more durable and to shed water; but even these quickly wear out, and require to be renewed every few weeks. That which is not oiled does not allow of being washed; and a new suit is necesssary once a month. An immense deal of time and labor must therfore be requisite to meet the demands of the whole population.[21]

[20]Buck, *Arts and Crafts of Hawaii*, p. 166-167.
[21]C. S. Stewart, *Private Journal of a Voyage to the Pacific Ocean and Residence at the Sandwich Islands in the Years 1822-1825* (New York, 1828), p. 144.

Native Hawaiian historian David Malo recalled at the turn of the century that "From the time of Kamehameha I down to the present reign of Kamehameha III we have been supplied with cloth imported from foreign lands. These new stuffs we call *lole* (to change). It has many names according to the pattern."[22]

As early as October 20, 1851, Sarah Joiner Lyman, wife of the Reverend David Belden Lyman, a Christian missionary stationed on the Big Island, wrote to her sister Melissa regarding Hawaiian kapa's pending death:

In the Box which I have just packed for you, you will find a large Conch shell, a few pieces of coral—volcanic specimens—kapa—a kapa pounder, 2 Josh sticks 1 candle 2 dried guavas, a few seeds a piece of an Indian's dress etc. etc. Unpack with care.

The Conch is not so nice as I could wish, but as they are scarce and not obtained at this place, I cannot send a better one. This was from the north part of this Island. The kapa pounder is such as is used in manufacturing the native kapa. This with a square block of wood is all the apparatus used and this fast going into disuse, for foreign cloths, which are much more durable, are taking the place of kapa. In the remote districts it is still manufactured and pretty generally used for sleeping in. I send you some small specimens as the good folks around you may not have seen any. . . . When kapa was generally used by the natives, they took great pains to stamp it with bright colors and a great variety of figures, but I presume there is very little stamping done now. It took some time to figure a whole sheet with such a little stick as I send you, nevertheless it was done, and they were exceedingly proud of their gay Malos *and* paus *for a considerable time after we came here, the latter, worn by the females, went into disuse long ago and the former is not much worn even by the old men.*[23]

Perhaps an old man did make kapa in Hawaii as recently as 1923, but the truth is that Hawaiian kapa-making as a living tradition is extinct. Fortunate-

[22]David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities (Moolelo Hawaii)* (Honolulu, 1903), p. 75.
[23]Sarah Joiner Lyman, *Her Own Story* (Hilo, Hawaii, 1970), pp. 129-130.

ly Cook and King, and other naturalists, explorers, missionaries, militarists and merchantmen in their steps, took time to collect and conserve several rare samples of 18th and 19th century kapa. Had this not been so, considering the fragility of the fabric and the fact that its manufacture in abundance ceased about a hundred years ago, we would have few specimens to appreciate today.

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SPECIMENS OF HAWAIIAN KAPA

printed from Centaur, Arrighi and Inkunabula types on

Italian handmade Roma, from Fabriano

by

ANDREW HOYEM, PRINTER

San Francisco - January 1979.

Specimens of Hawaiian

KAPA

Fascicles containing original pieces of bark cloth and reproductions of the full sheets, showing the complete pattern, with physical description & provenance for each specimen.

INVENTORY FOR THIS COPY

No. 28

INVENTORY

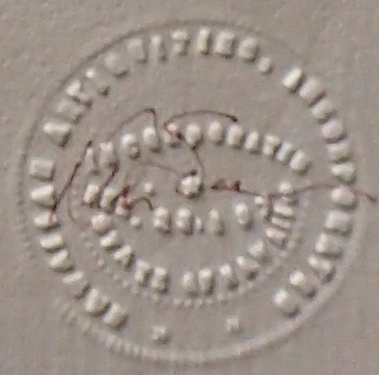
Prefix A is an assigned number. No identification number existed on the kapa.

PART	DESCRIPTION	No.		REMARKS
I	Kapa sent to the American Board of Commissioners for foreign missions by Hawaiian missionaries.	A-1	✓	
		157	✓	
		143	✓	
		126	✓	
		147	✓	
		18	✓	
		153	✓	
		128	✓	
		A-2	✓	
		146	✓	
		155	✓	
		120	✓	
		150	✓	
		A-3	✓	
		A-4		
		A-5		
		145		
		189		
		152		

INVENTORY

Prefix B is assigned to burial kapa.

PART	DESCRIPTION	No.	REMARKS
II	Kapa taken to England by Hawaii's Queen Emma in 1865.	A-6	✓
III	Kapa presented to Saffron Walden Museum by Edmond Murphelley.	A-7	✓
		A-8	✓
IV	Kapa collected by Captain James Roberts.	A-9	✓
V	Kapa collected by the Bloxam brothers, voyage of H.M.S. Blonde, 1825.		
	Top sheet kapa moi	A-10	✓
	Second sheet	A-11	✓
	Third sheet	A-12	✓
VI	Kapa from the A. J. Ostheimer Collection, Honolulu.	A-13	✓
VII	Kapa from the Watters Mahiole Martin Collection, Honolulu.	A-14	✓
VIII	Kapa from the Severson Collection, Honolulu.		
	Top sheet kapa moi	A-15	✓
	Second sheet	A-16	✓
		A-17	✓
IX	Burial kapa, Kona Coast.	B-1	✓
		B-2	
		B-3	
		B-4	
		B-5	
		B-6	
		B-7	



MAR. CASTRO, MUSEUM
INCORPORATED
CHICAGO

PART I

#18

A.B.C.F.M.

Red and black design on mustard ground.

250cm. x 207cm.

On October 23, 1819, the brig *Thaddeus* sailed from Boston, Massachusetts, with the first company of missionaries destined for the Sandwich Islands. Sent by the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions during a time of religious fervor, their arrival in March, 1820, was the herald of great changes to come in Hawaii.

The missionaries' observations in diaries and letters provide perceptive vignettes of life in the Islands at that time. Many missionaries collected curiosities for shipment to the A.B.C.F.M. in Boston with letters explaining origin and manufacture. Some missionaries took kapa as rental payment on their newly acquired land, which might later be used in barter or trade. As a result of their interest, we have examples of kapa produced during a period of radical transformation in Hawaiian life.

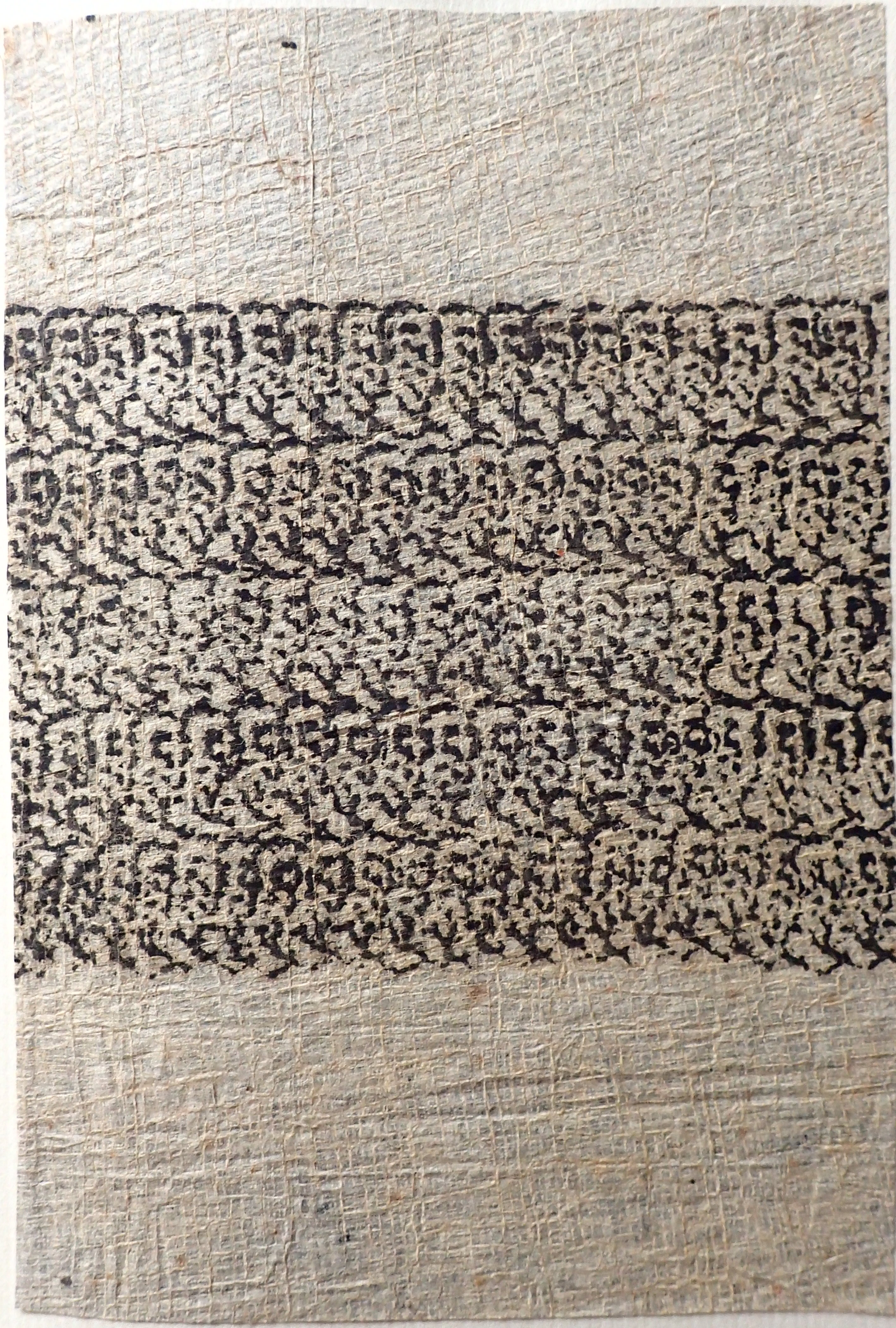
Kapa that was made with introduced metal tools differed greatly from that of the pre-contact era. It took on new forms: delicate designs applied with finely carved bamboo sticks; subtle water marks from intricate designs on tapa beaters; and kapa as sheer as fine lace. This was a native industry burgeoning with new tools, concepts and ideas.

Unfortunately the new impetus given kapa manufacture lasted but a short time. By 1850, it was unusual to see kapa worn. Only in the remote areas did it continue to be used in daily life. The following A.B.C.F.M. kapa are from that time.



PART I

#18





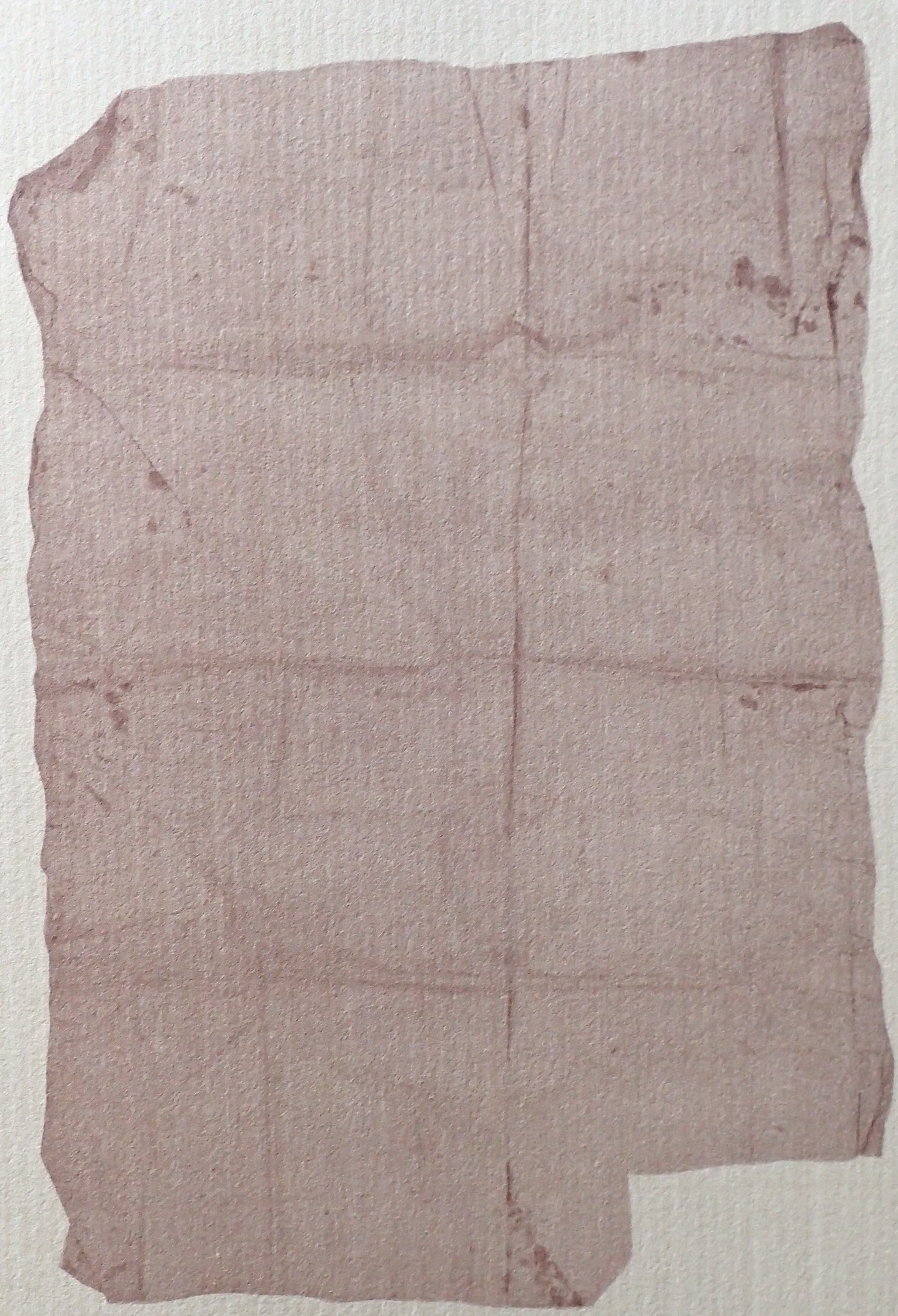
PART I

#A-1

A.B.C.F.M.

Yellow with umber spotting.

104cm. x 68cm.



PART I

#A-1



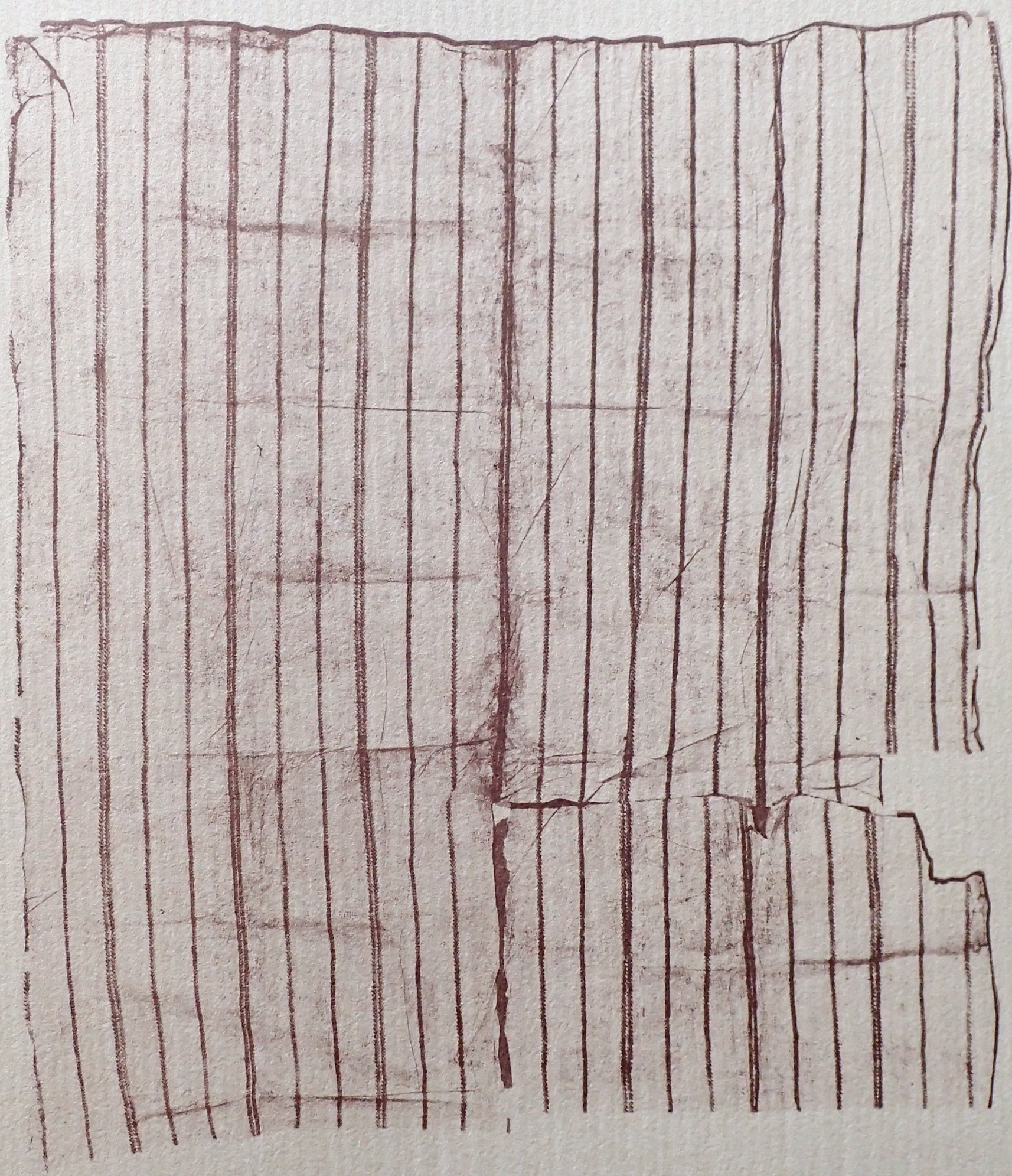
PART I

#157

A.B.C.F.M.

Brown imprint on beige background.

Approximately 233cm. x 197cm.



PART I

#157





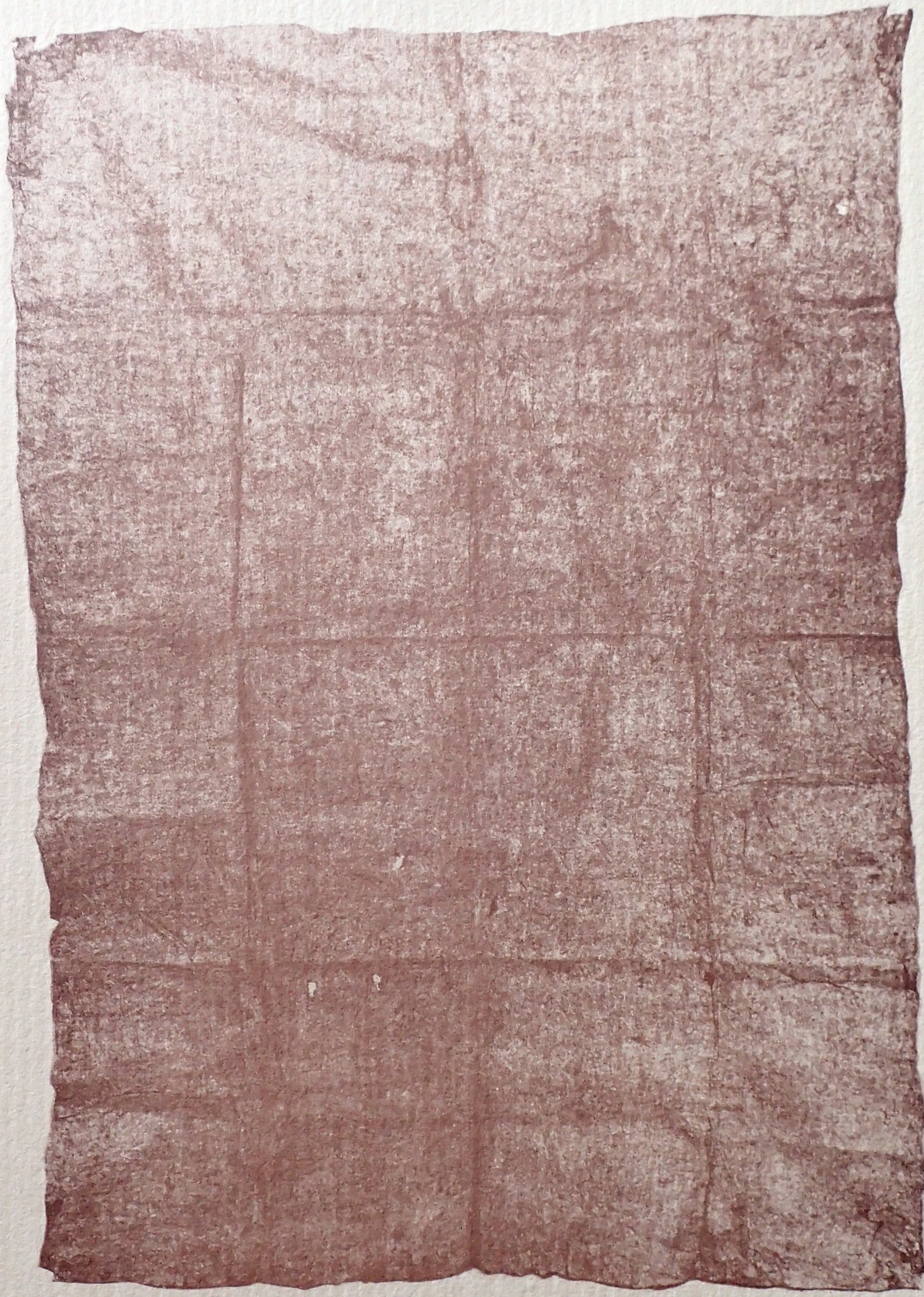
PART I

#143

A.B.C.F.M.

Brown.

248cm. x 173cm.



PART I

#143







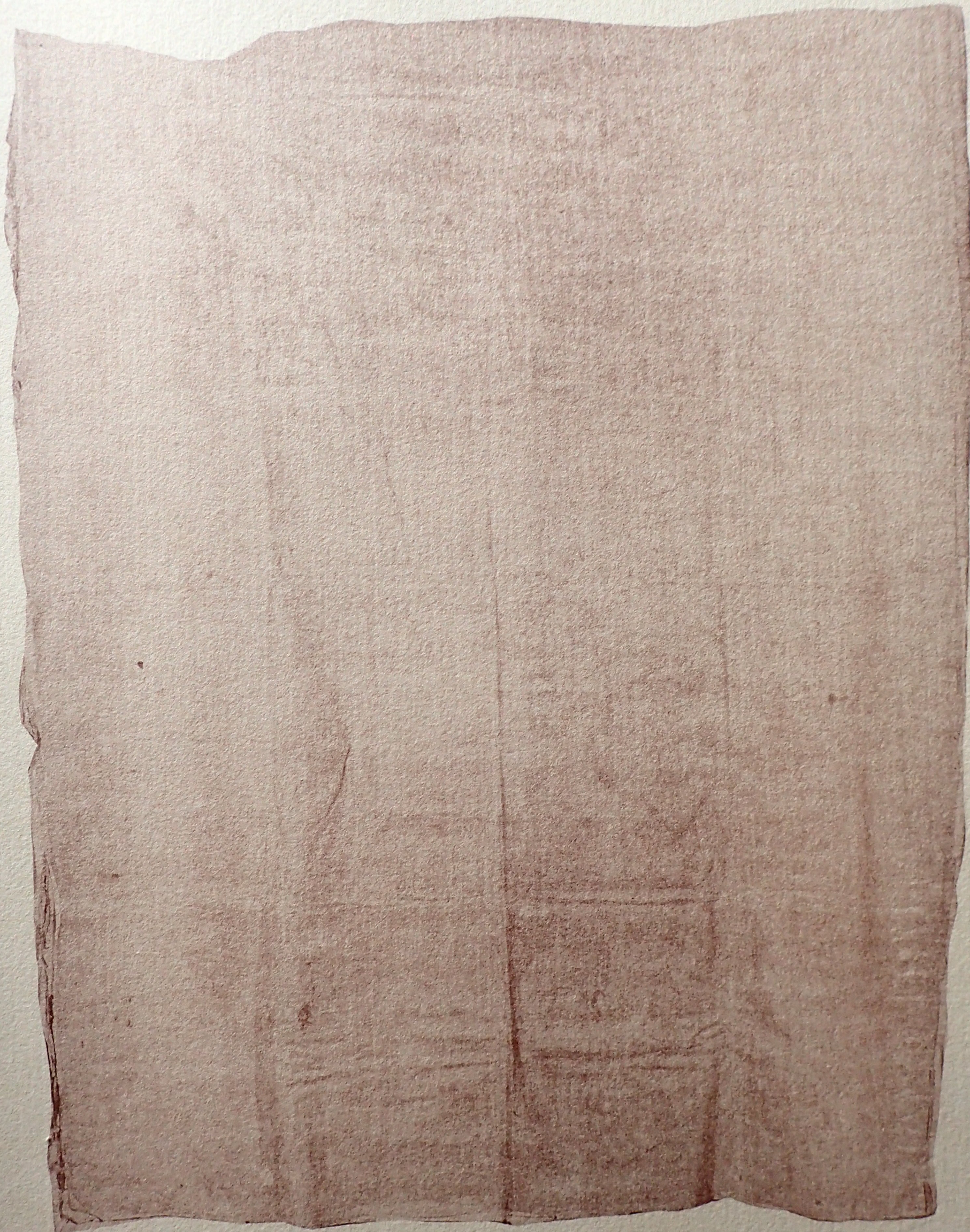
PART I

#126

A.B.C.F.M.

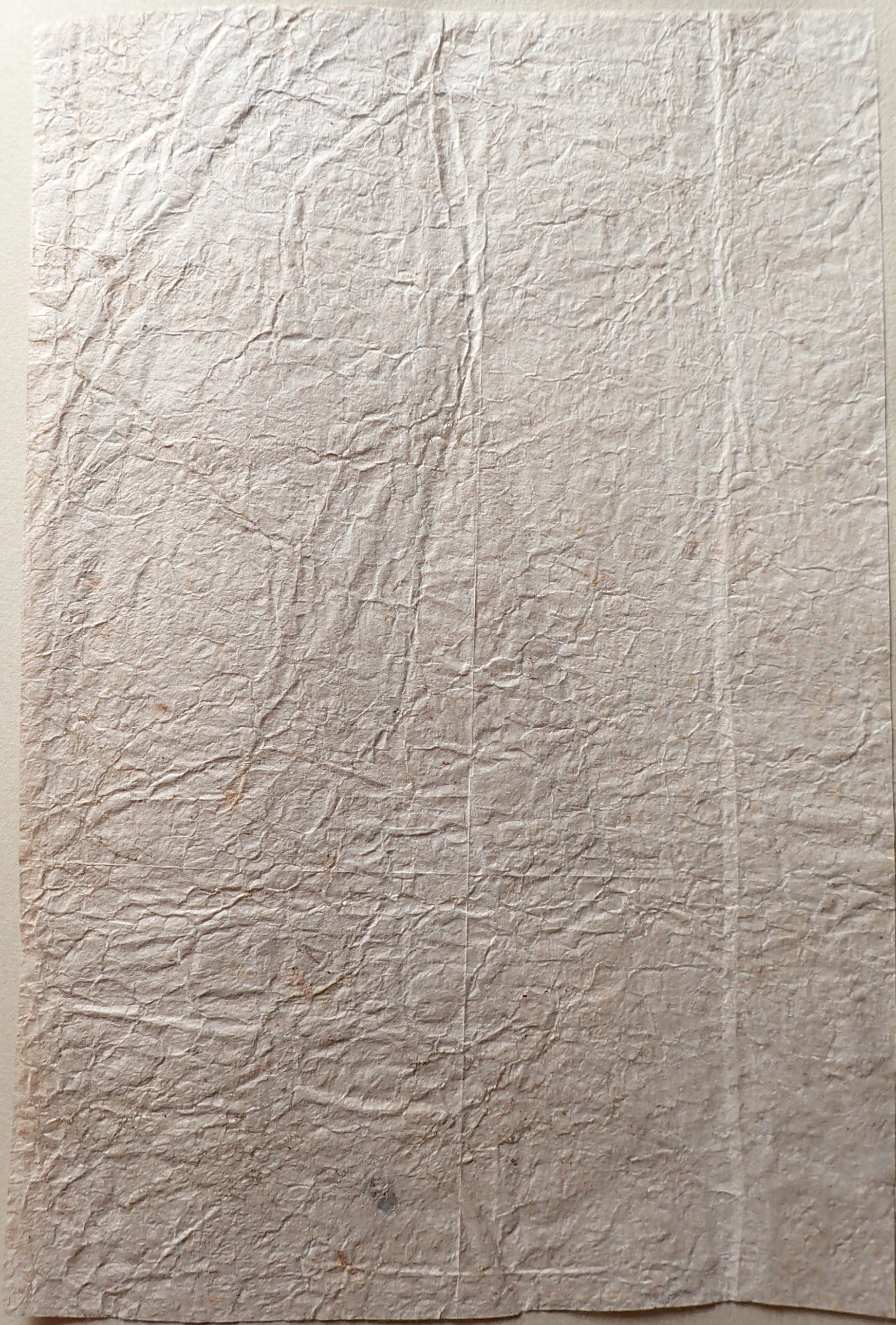
White.

183cm. x 197cm.



PART I

#126



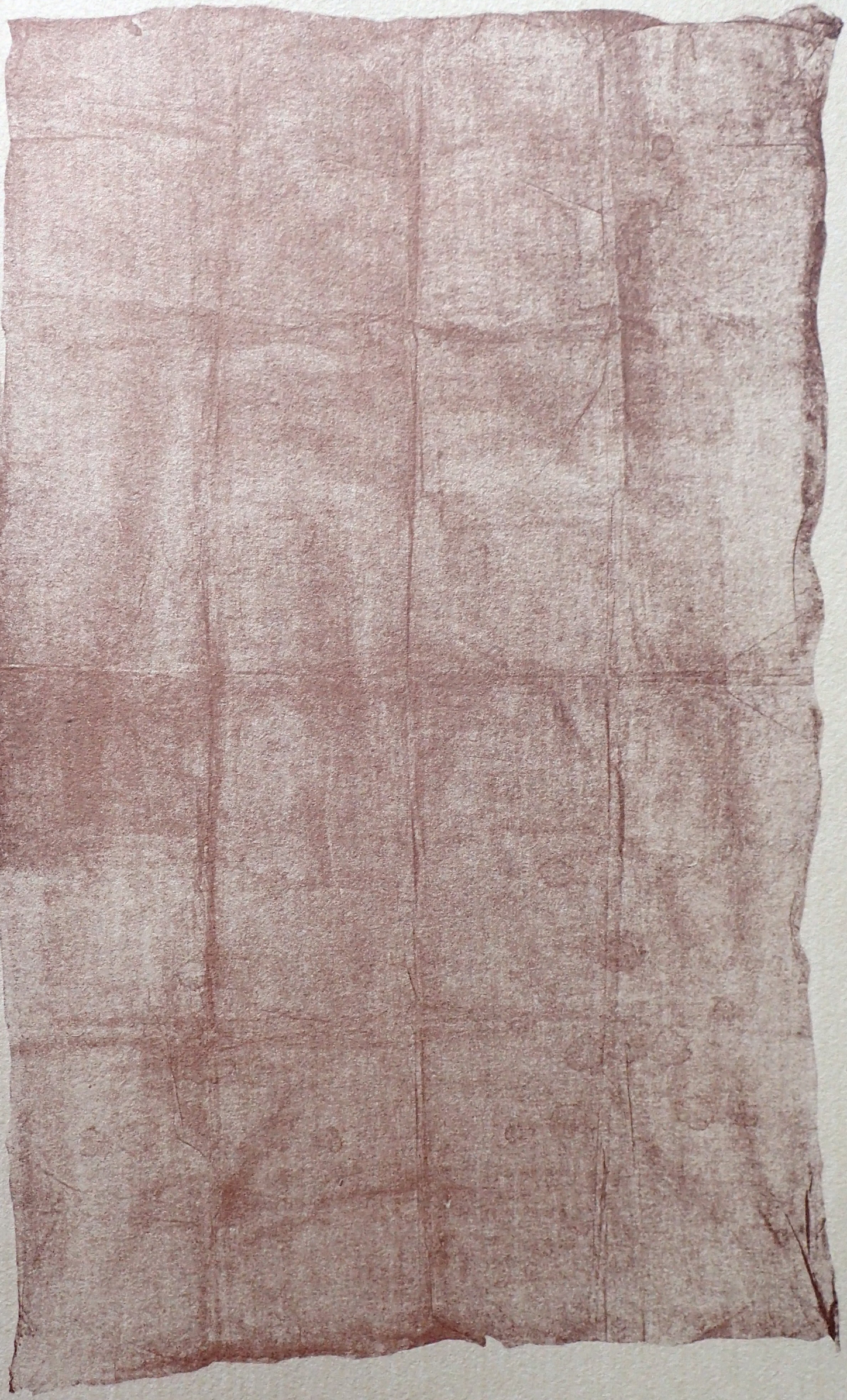
PART I

#147

A.B.C.F.M.

Brown.

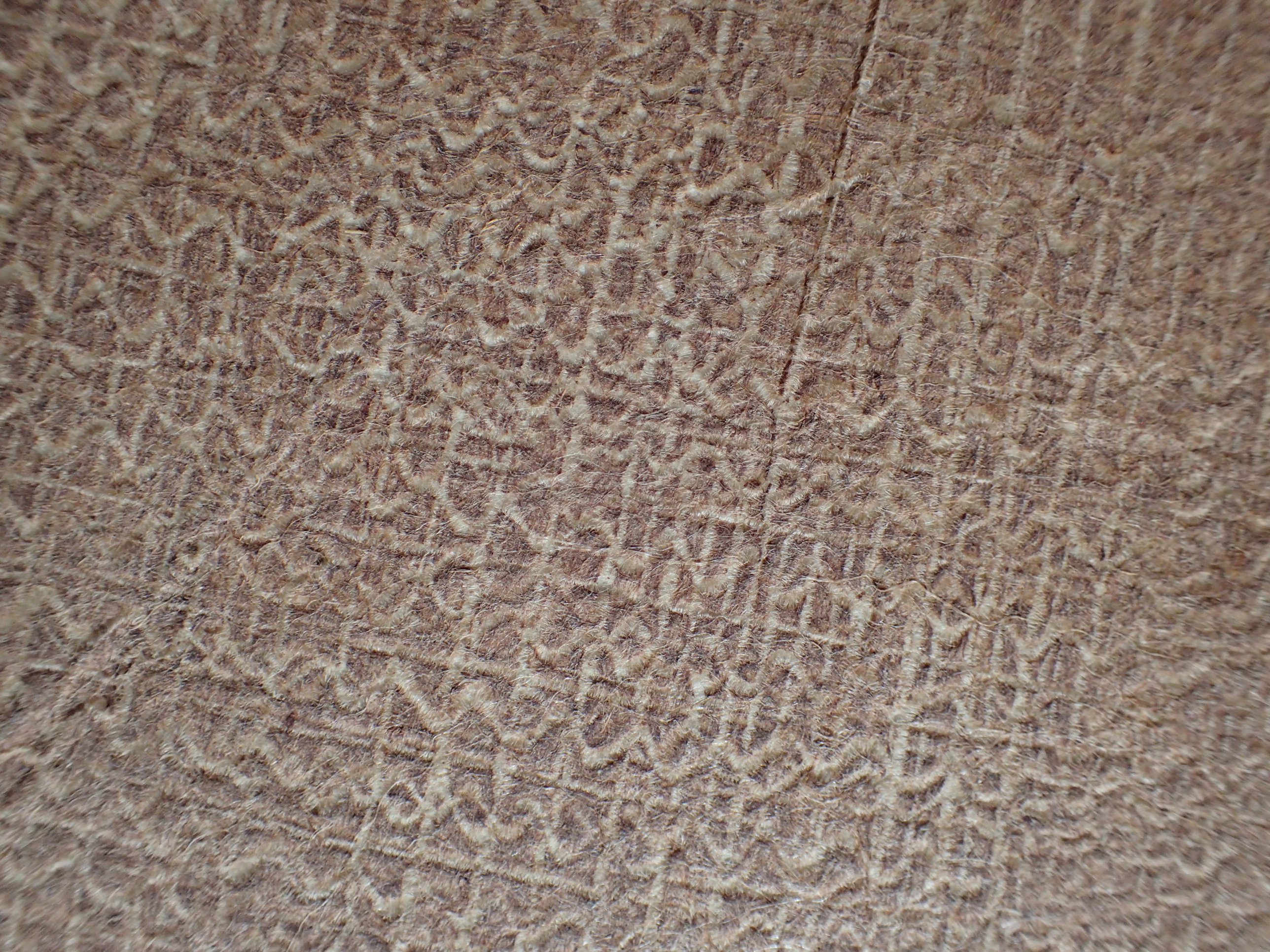
200cm. x 310cm.



PART I

#147









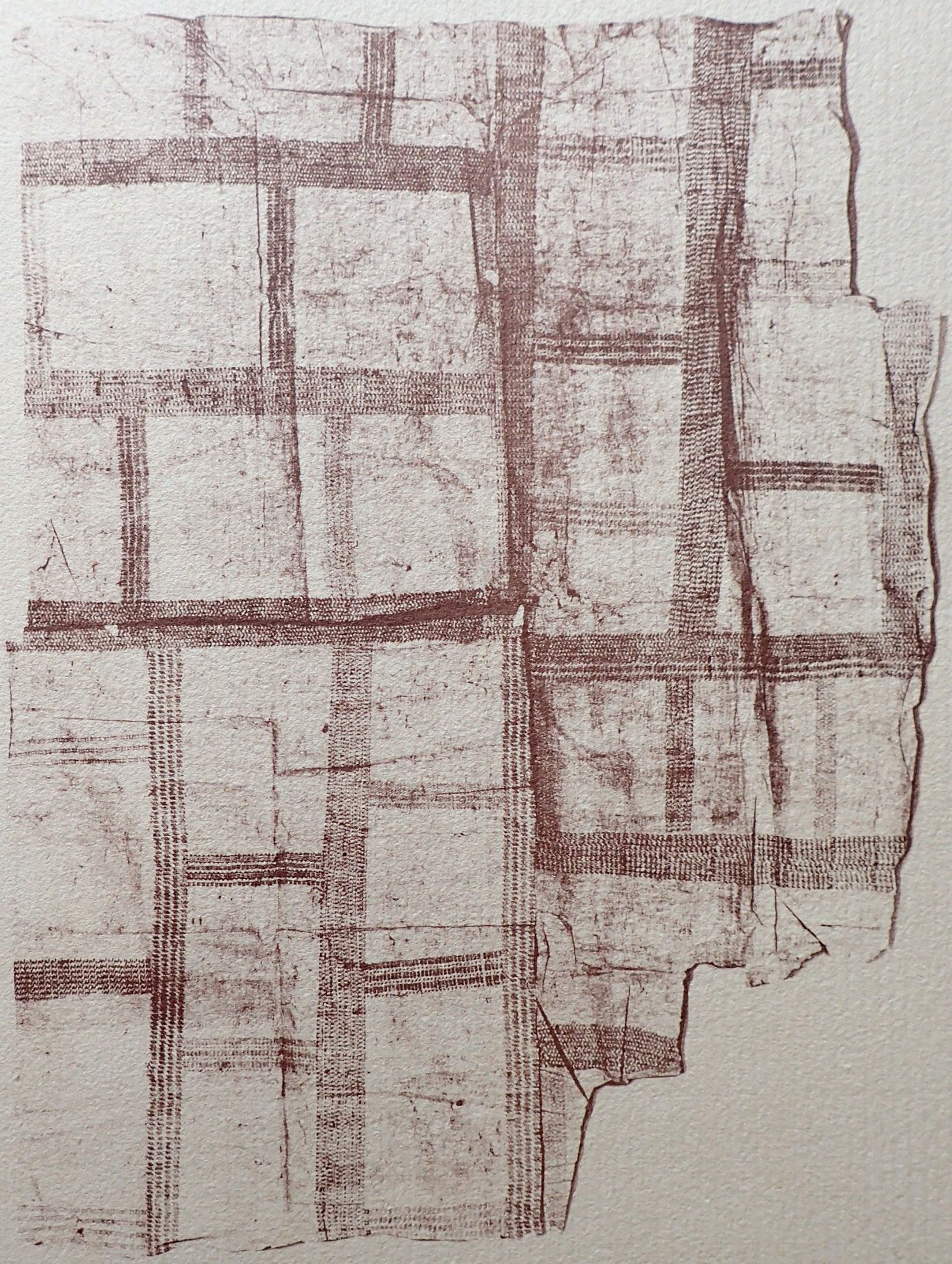
PART I

#153

A.B.C.F.M.

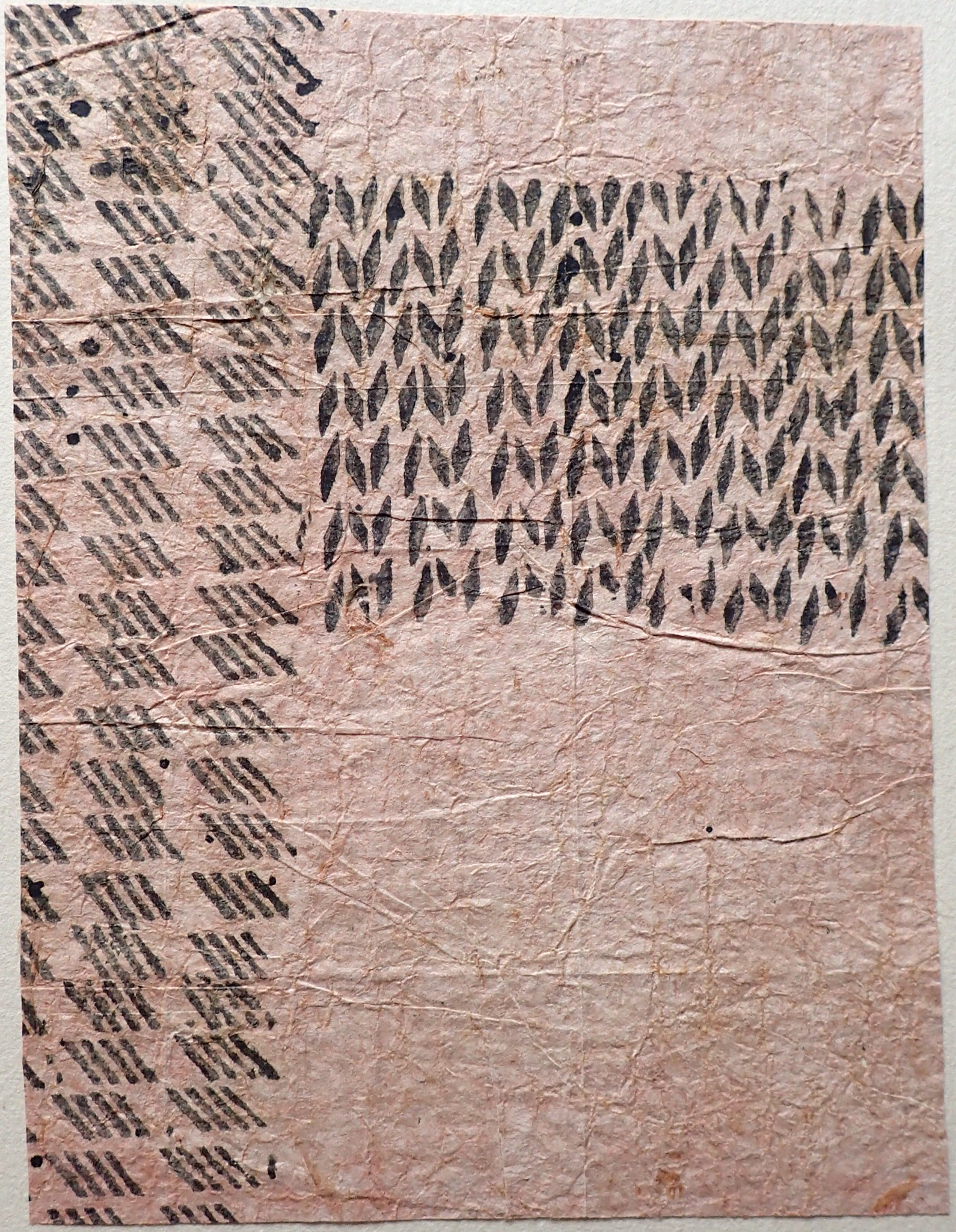
Red and black imprints on mottled pink.

Two pieces totaling 138cm. x 243cm.

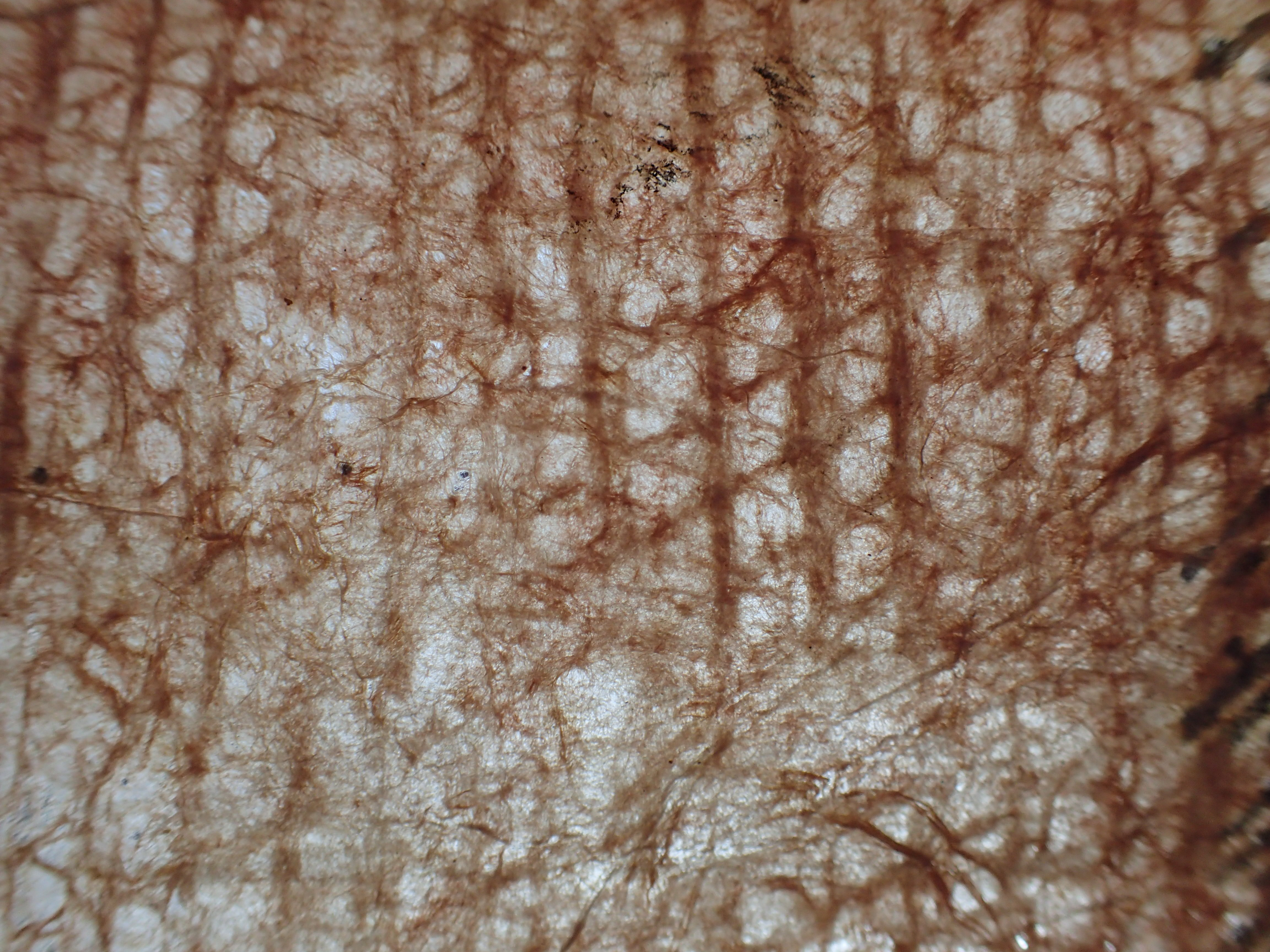


PART I

#153







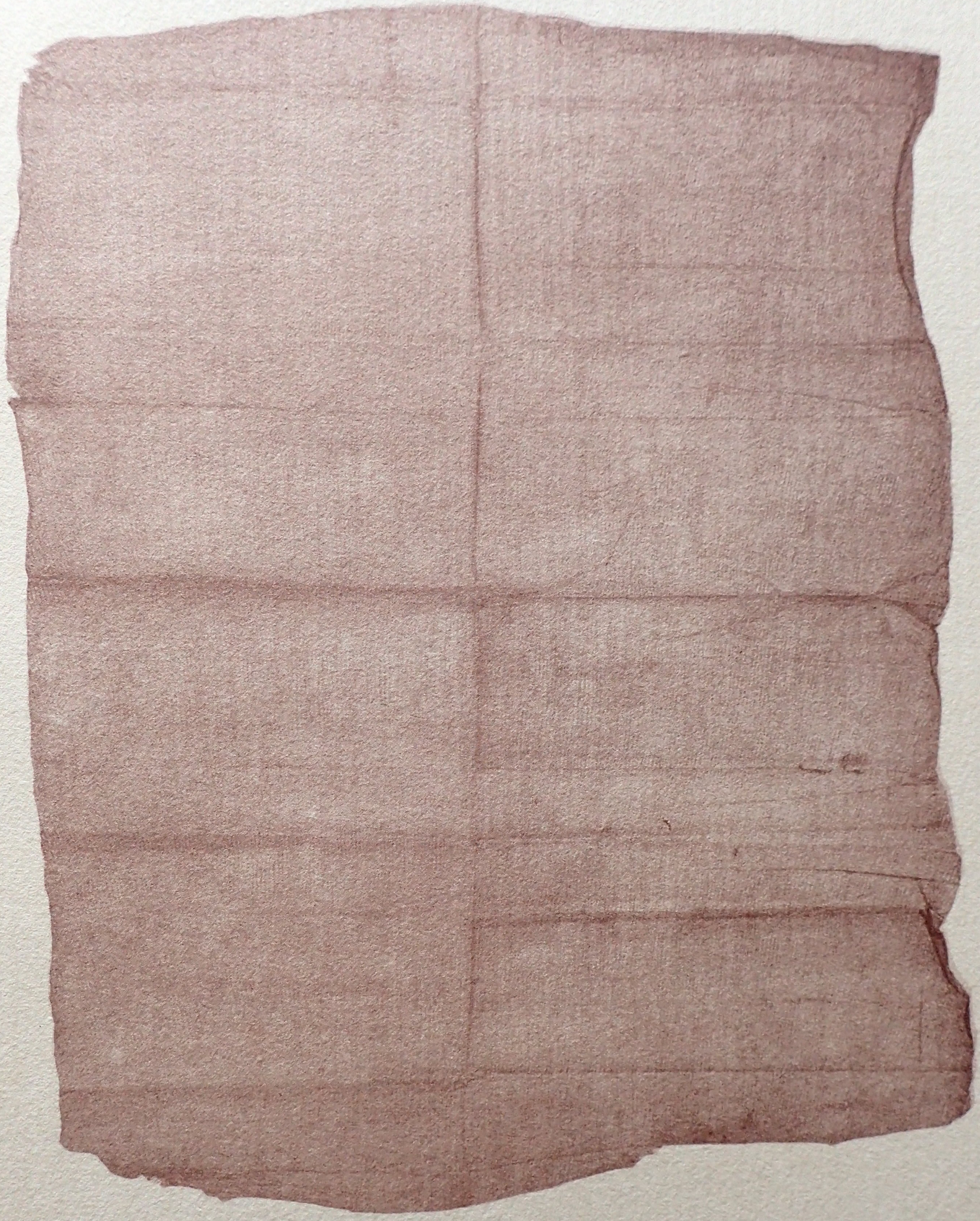
PART I

#128

A.B.C.F.M.

Grey-white.

114cm. x 77cm.



PART I

#128





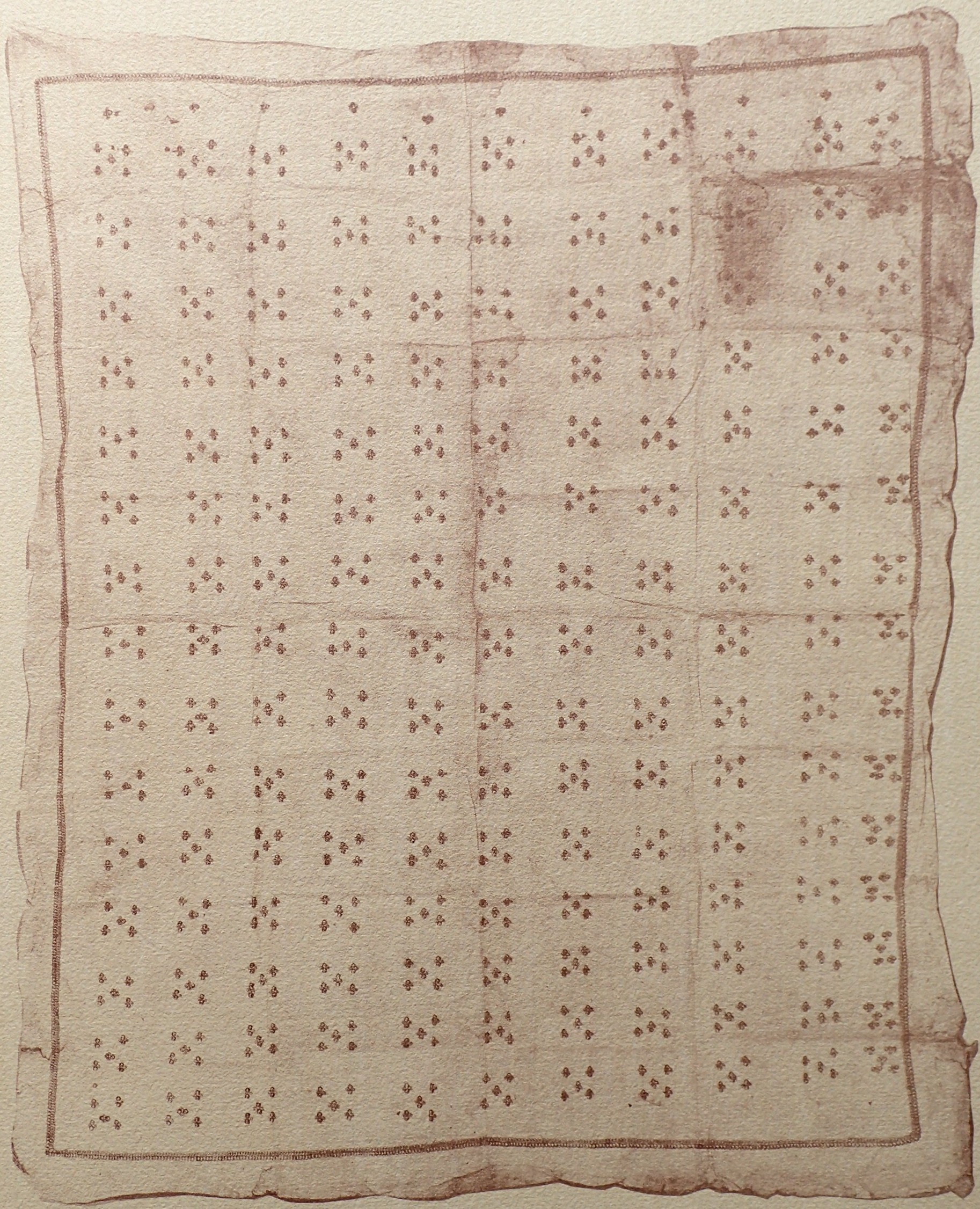
PART I

#A-2

A.B.C.F.M.

Red and black on white ground.

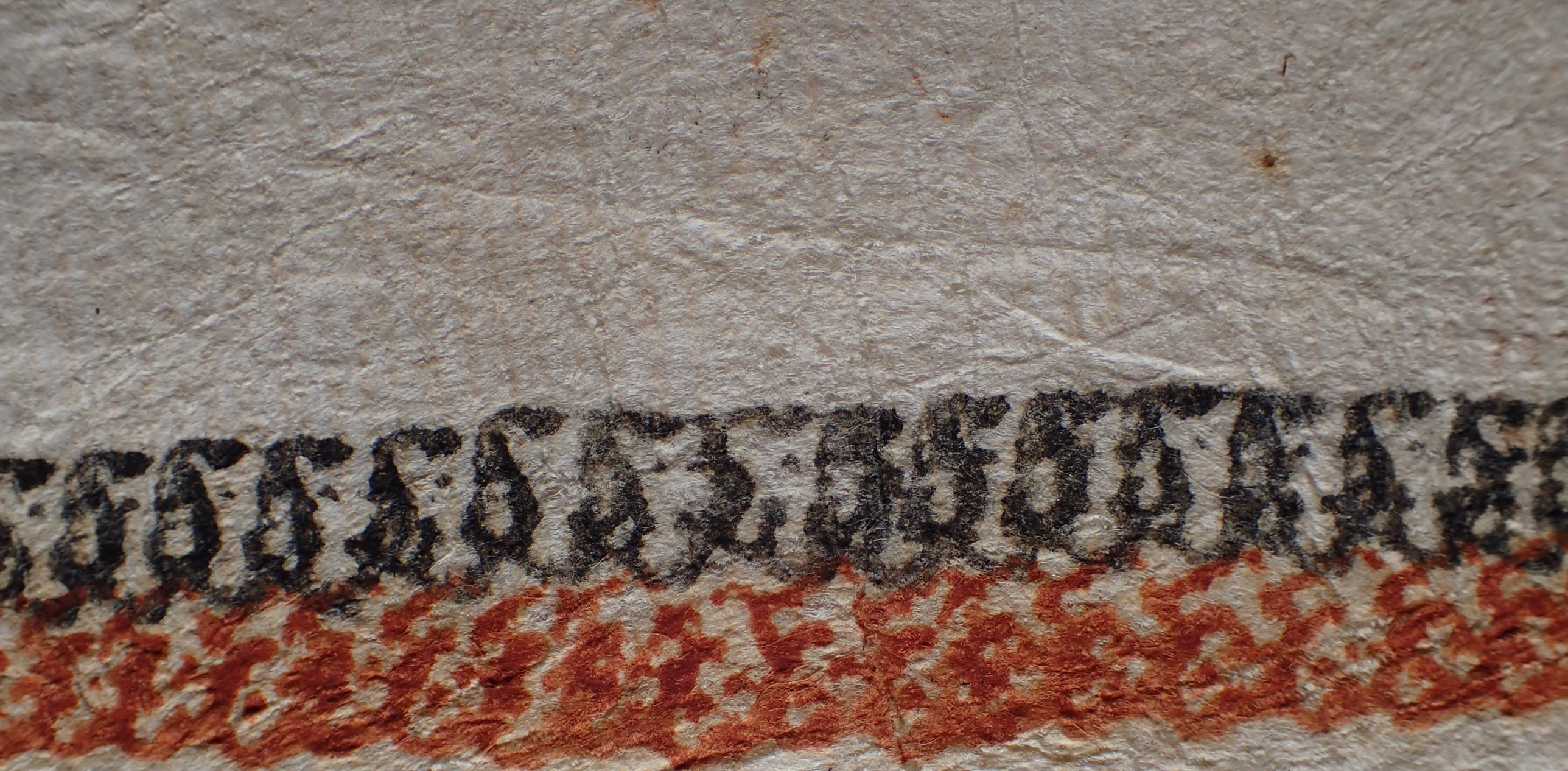
258cm. x 209cm.



PART I

#A-2







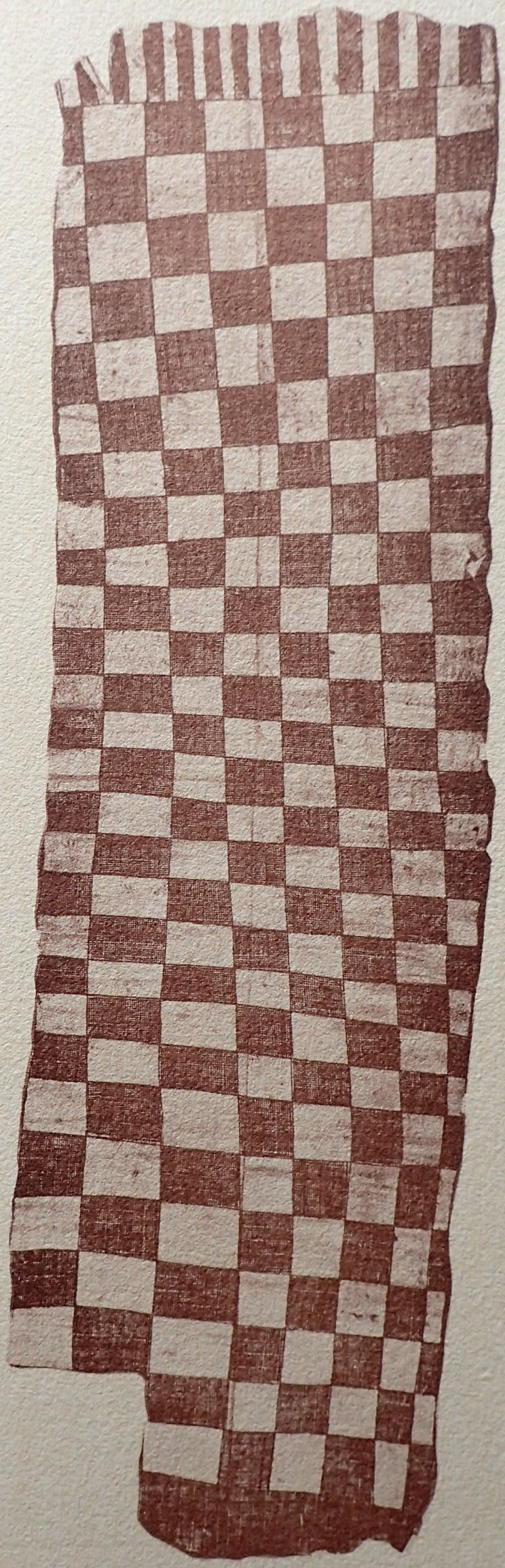
PART I

#146

A.B.C.F.M.

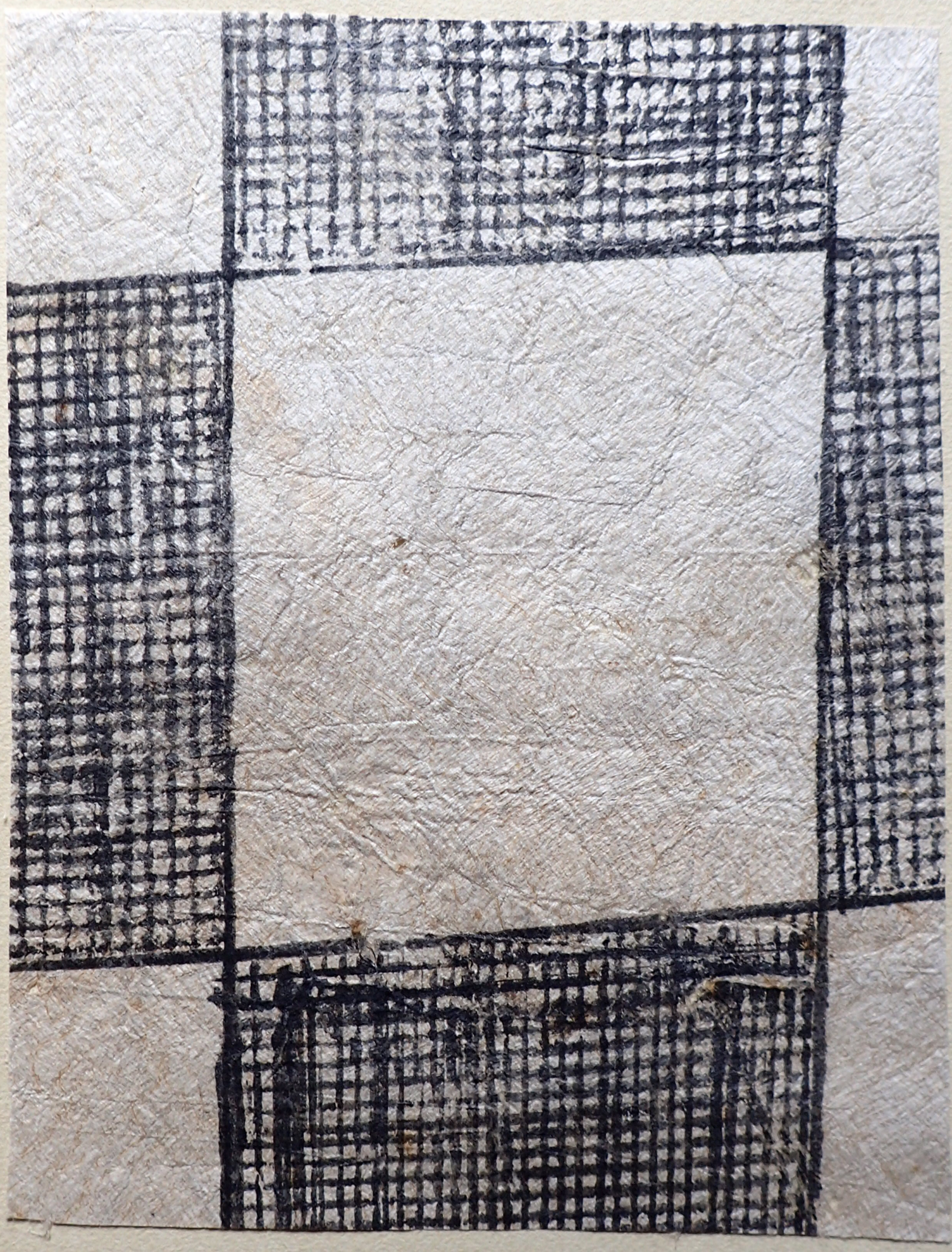
Black squares on white.

268cm. x 76cm.



PART I

#146







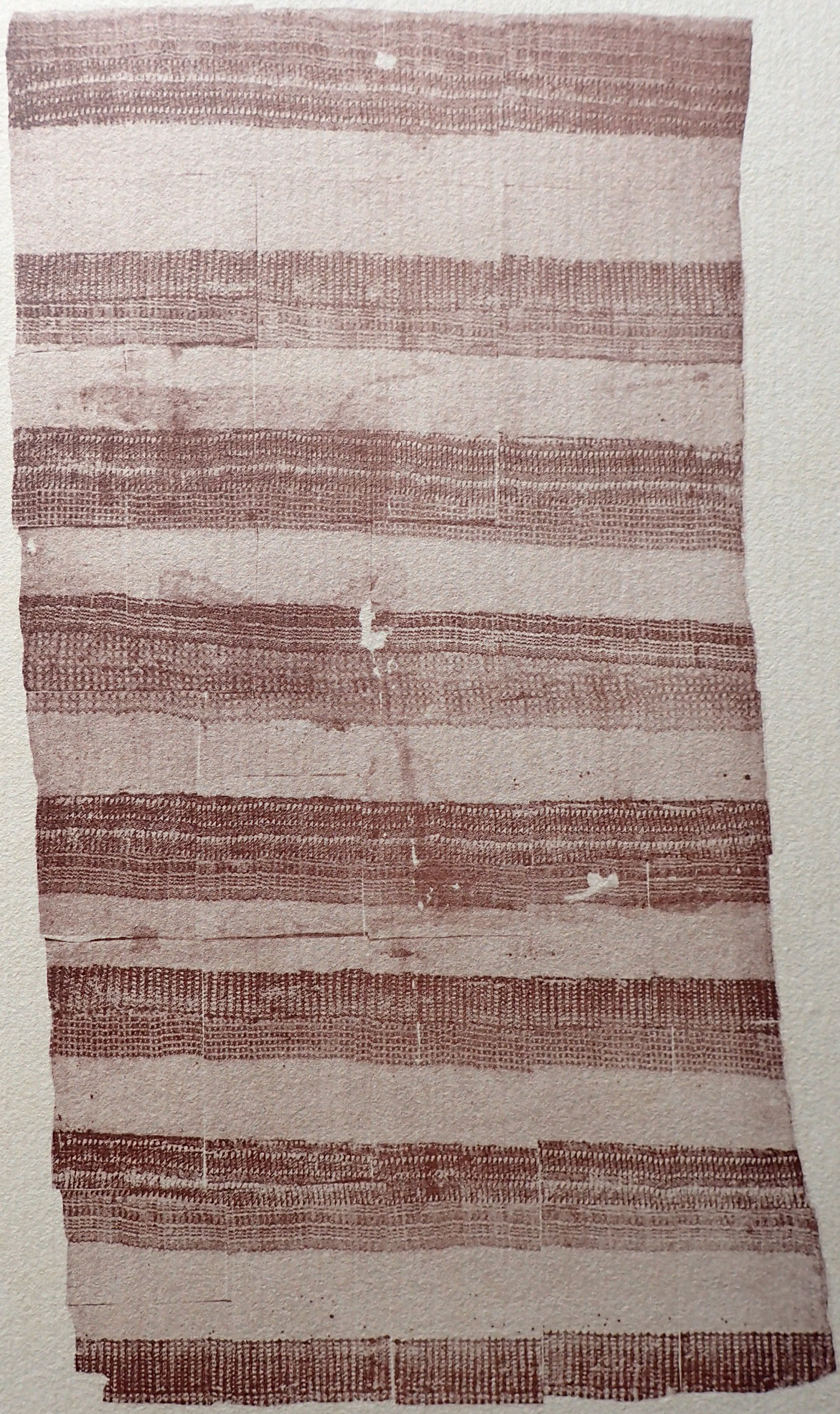
PART I

#155

A.B.C.F.M.

Red and black imprints on beige.

Several pieces totaling approximately 96cm. x 73cm.



PART I

#155







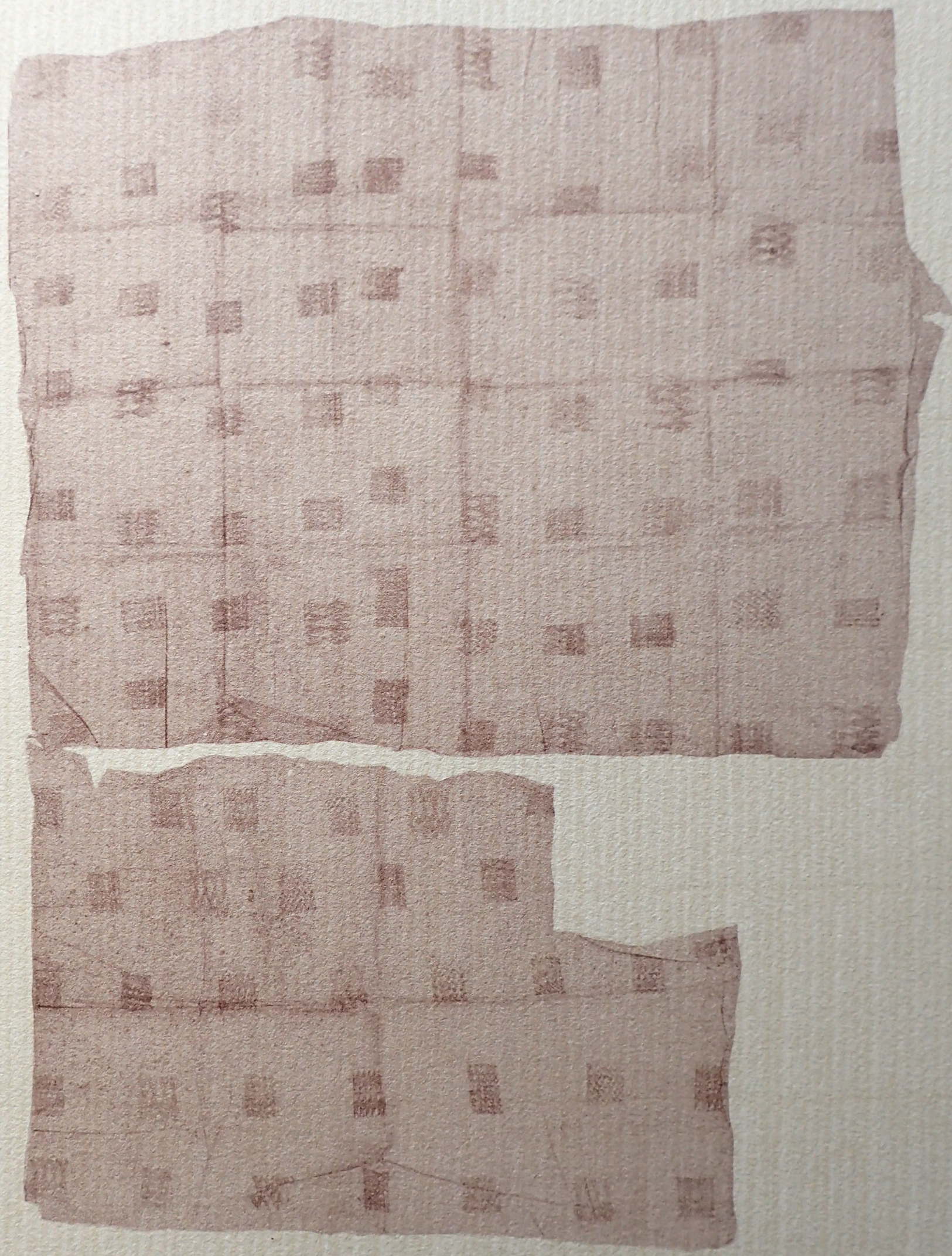
PART I

#120

A.B.C.F.M.

Grey-black design on faded yellow.

Two pieces totaling 121cm. x 151cm.



PART I

#120





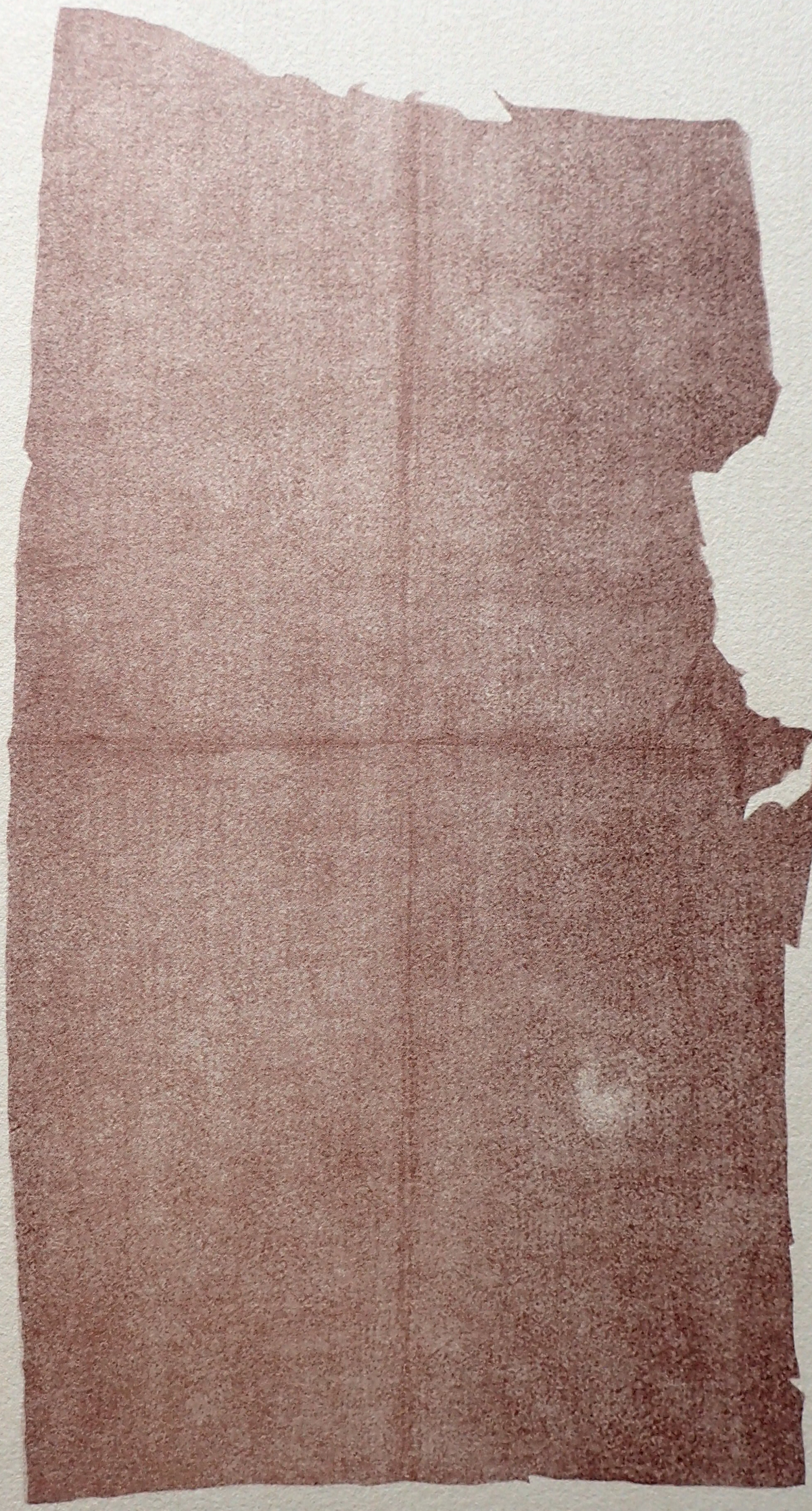
PART I

#150

A.B.C.F.M.

Pale red.

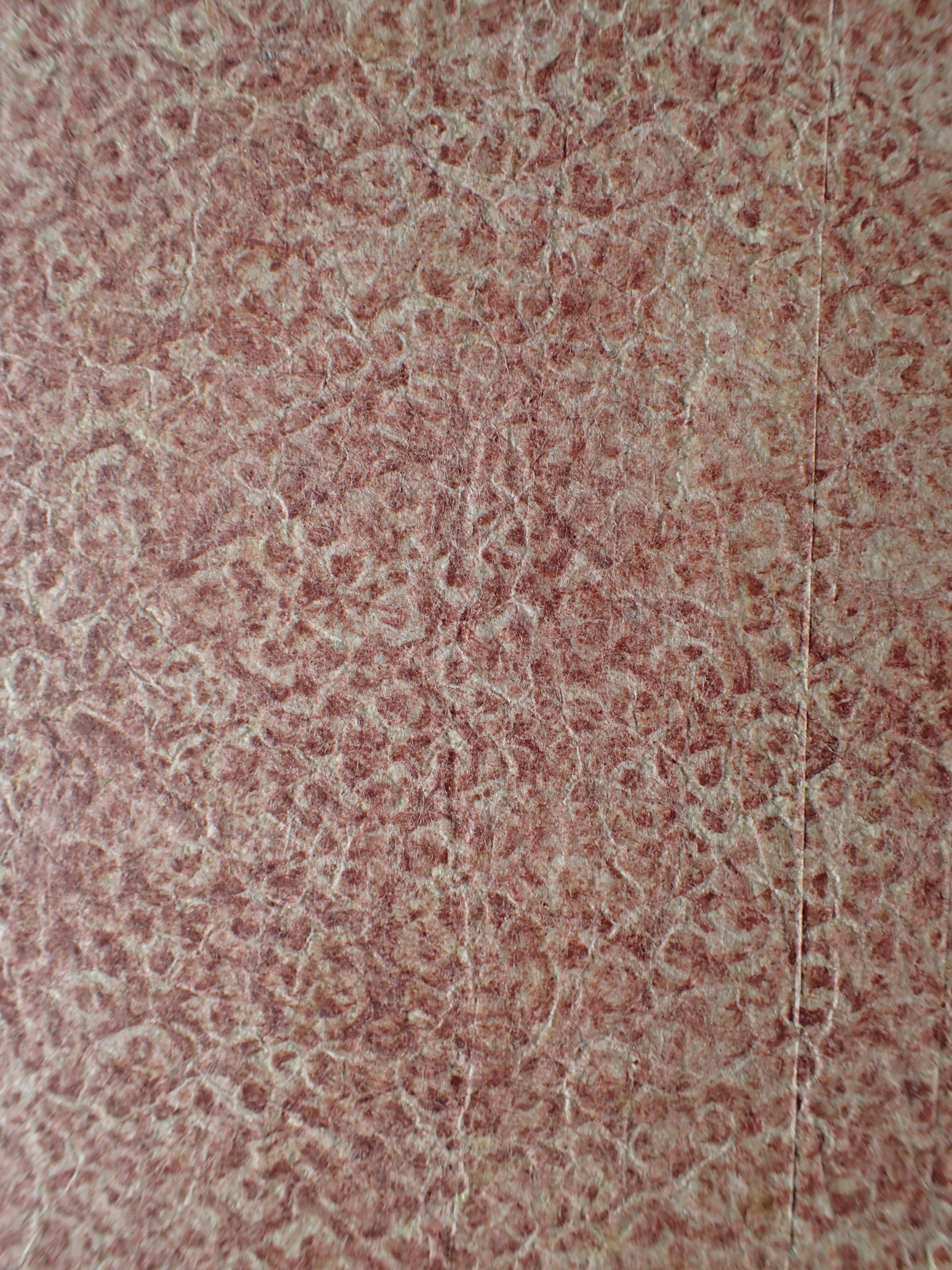
Approximately 92cm. x 61cm.



PART I

#150









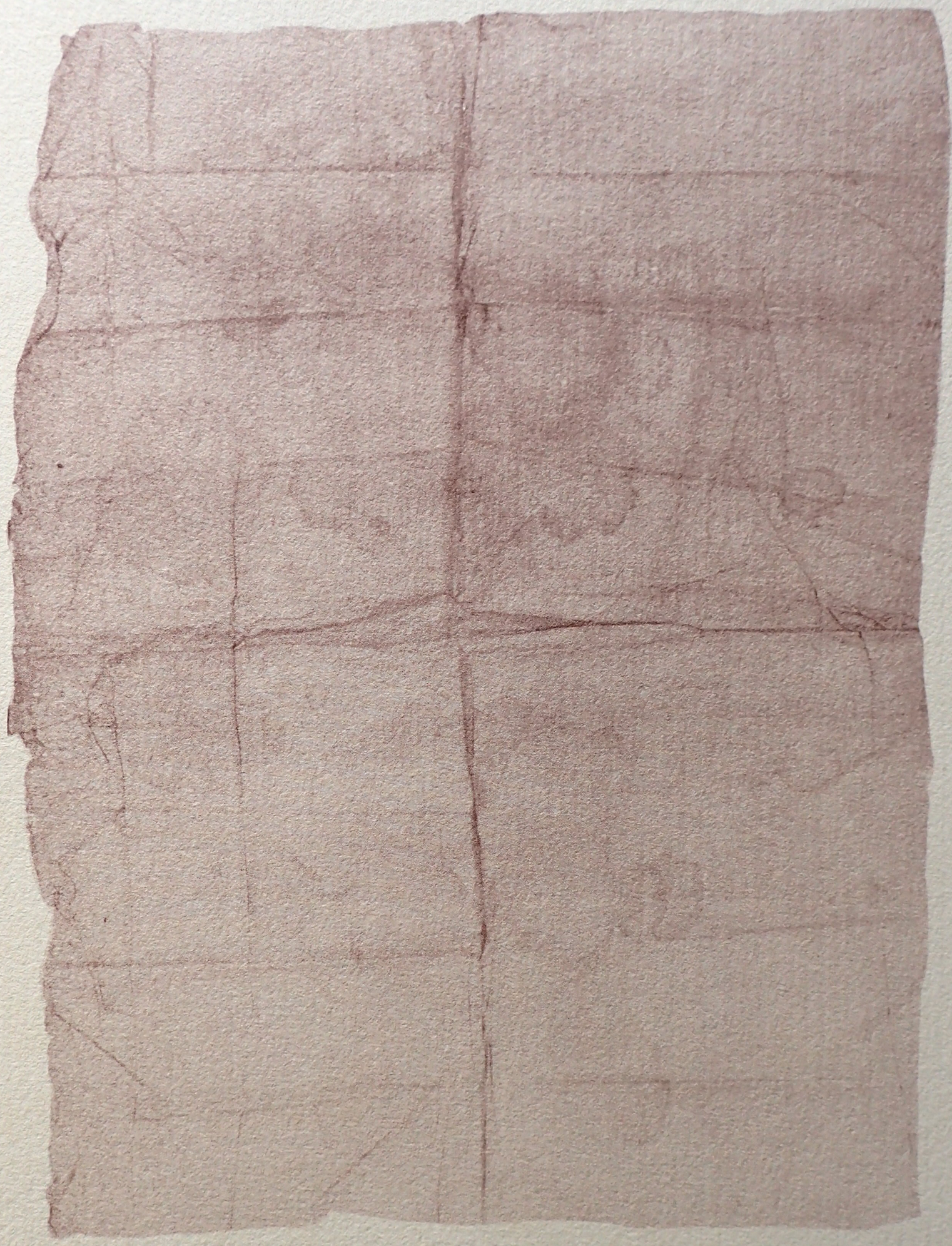
PART I

#A-3

A.B.C.F.M.

Pale yellow.

86cm. x 320cm.



PART I

#A-3





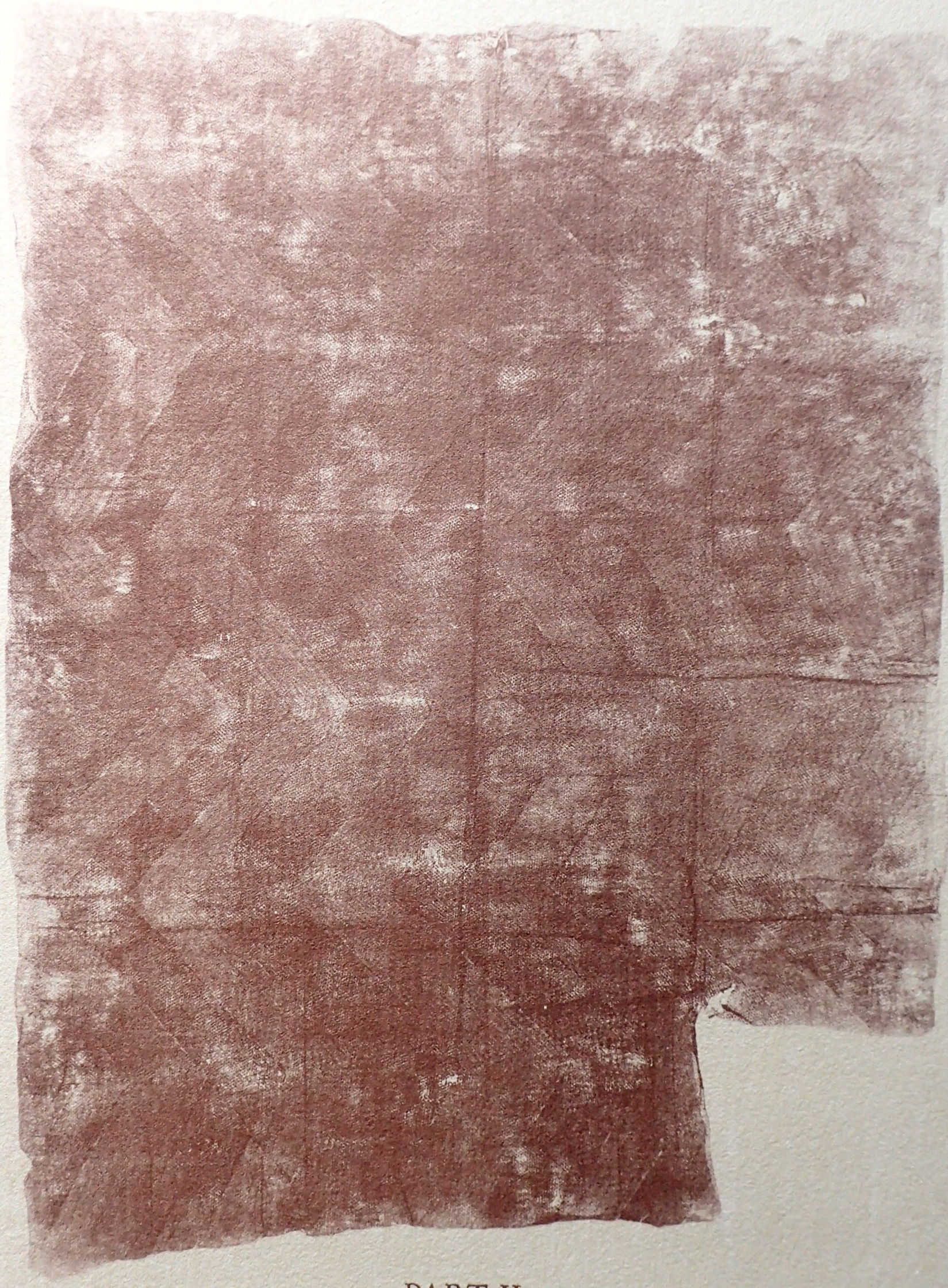


PART II

#A-6

Kapa taken to England by Queen Emma in 1865.
Broad zig-zags in red and brown.
175cm. x 140cm.

Queen Emma, wife of Kamehameha IV, had an English grandfather and was brought up by Dr. Rooke. A pretty and graceful queen who was very popular with her people, she was kind and benevolent and a staunch supporter of the English Church. This kapa was given to the Saffron Walden Museum by the Queen, and in later years was acquired by James Hooper and sold as Lot #157 in the Hooper Sale, London, 1977.

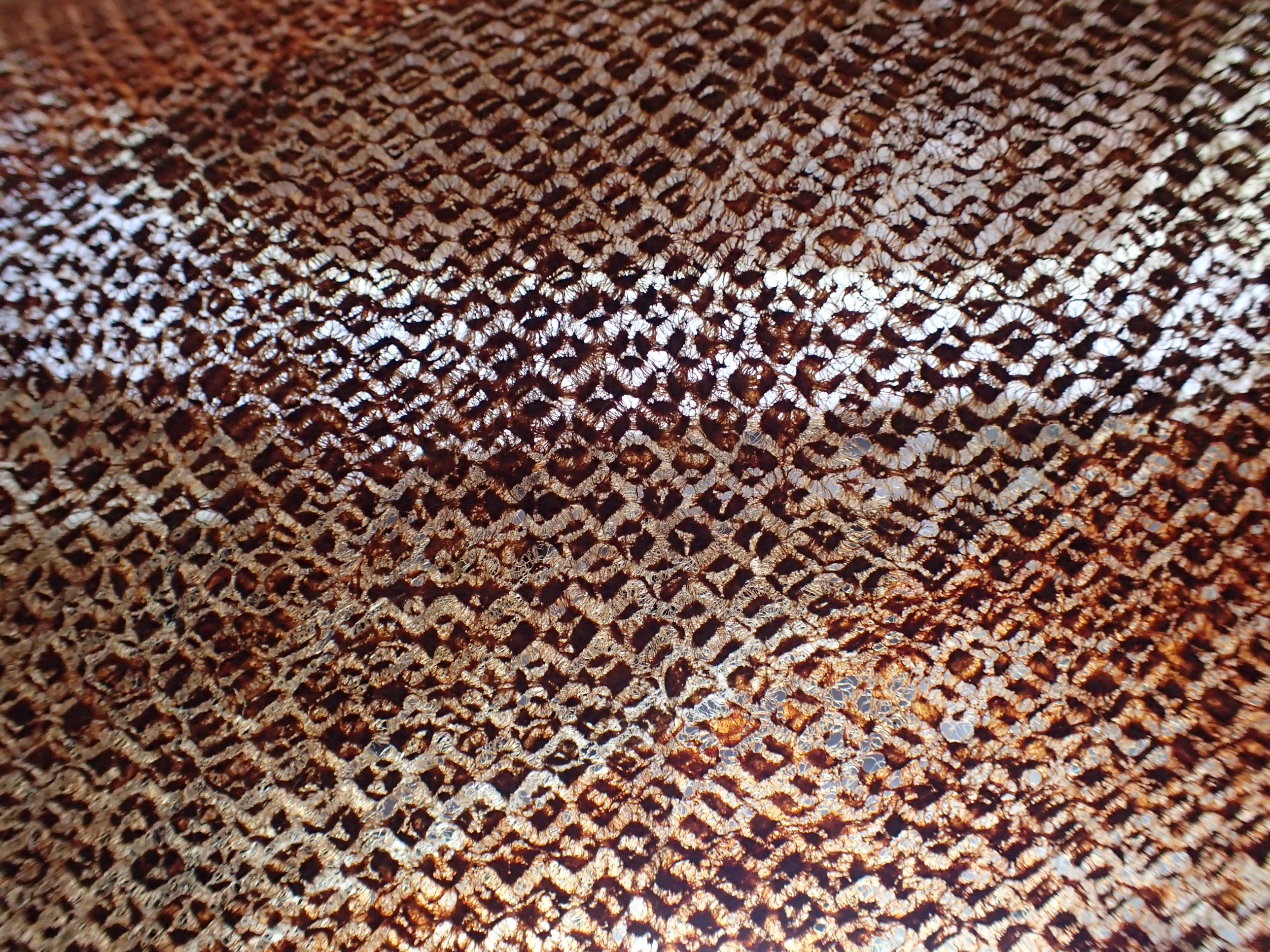


PART II

#A-6











PART III

#A-7

Kapa presented to the Saffron Walden Museum, England by
Mr. Edmond Murphelley, Esq.

Grey.

267cm. x 229cm.

Label: Piece of tapa or native cloth from the Sandwich Islands. Presented by Edmond Murphelley, Esq.

Acquired from the Saffron Walden Museum by James Hooper in 1945 and sold as Lot #165 in the Hooper Sale, London, 1977.



PART III

#A-7







PART III

#A-8

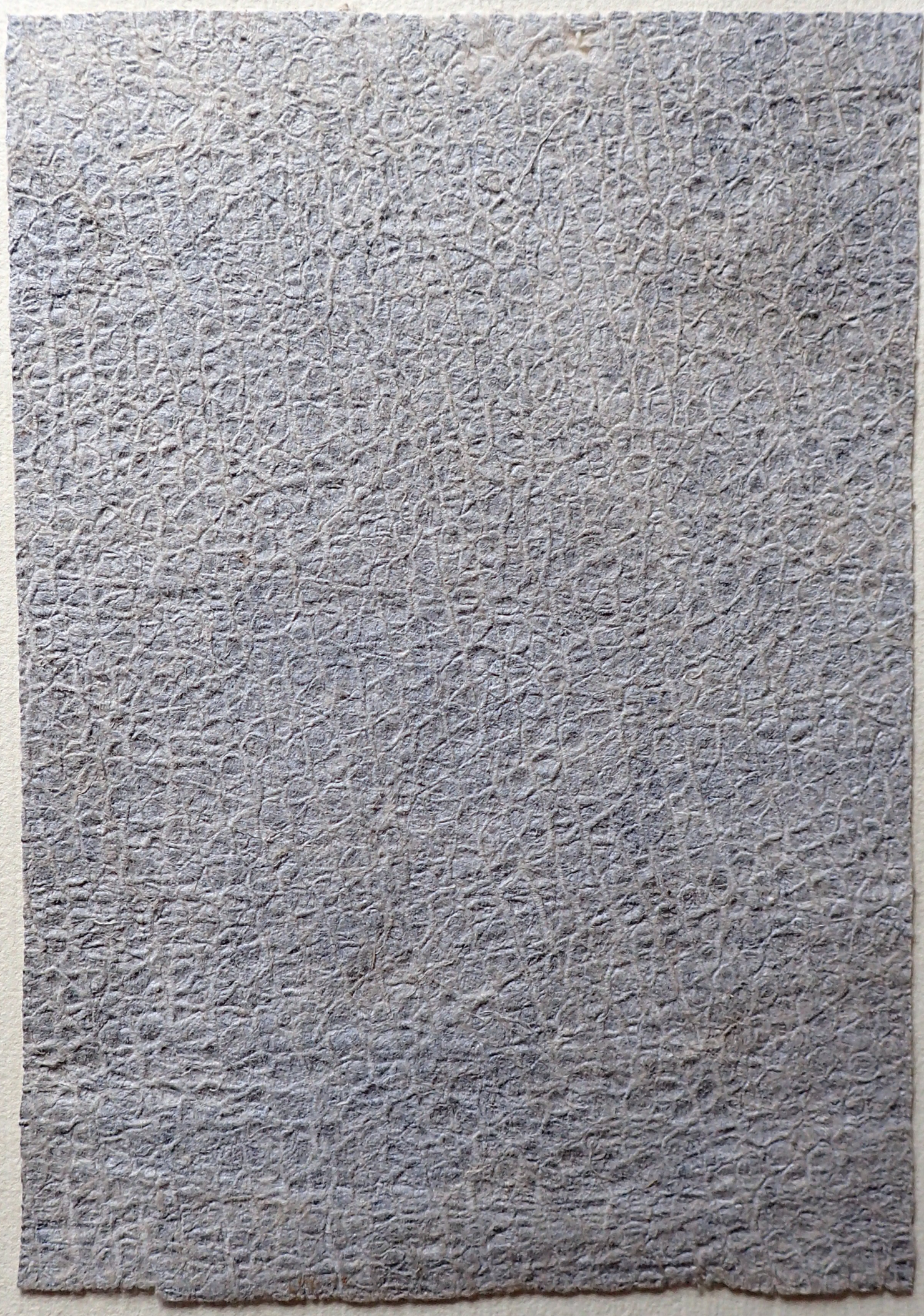
Kapa presented to the Saffron Walden Museum, England by
Mr. Edmond Murphelley, Esq.
Thick grey top, underside white.
Approximately 140cm. square.

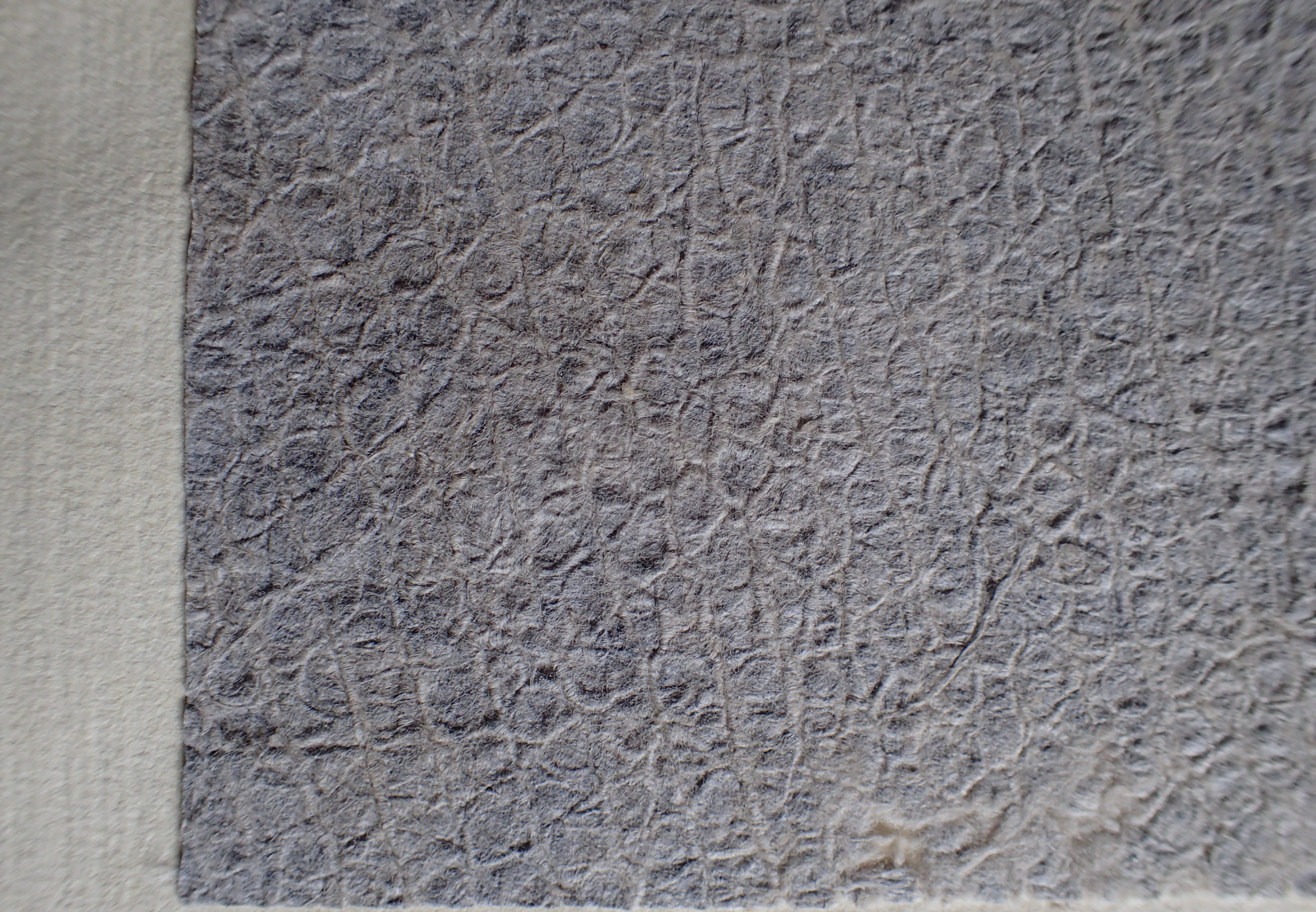
Acquired from the Saffron Walden Museum by James Hooper in 1945 and sold as Lot #156 in the Hooper Sale, London, 1977.



PART III

#A-8









PART IV

#A-9

Kapa collected by Captain James Roberts.
Black lozenge motif on reddish-brown ground.
178cm. x 106.5cm.

Captain James Roberts presented this kapa to the Saffron Walden Museum in 1822. Acquired from the Museum by James Hooper in 1945 and sold as Lot #159 in the Hooper Sale, London, 1977.

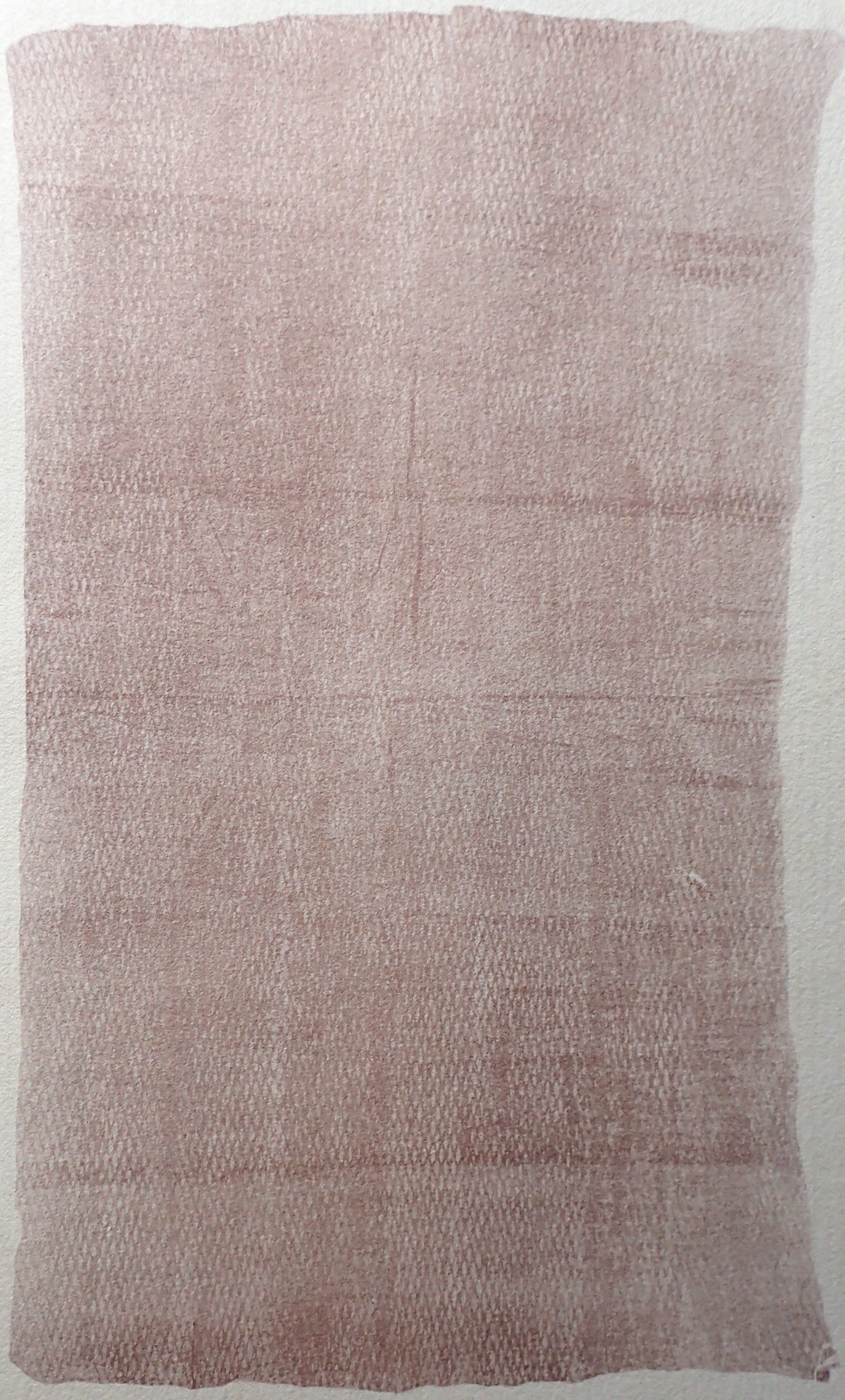
ERRATUM

Volume I: *Specimens of Hawaiian Kapa*

Item IV

Kapa collected by Captain James Roberts: This tapa is most likely Tahitian: The fiber is from the *Ficus prolixa,* a tree that is not indigenous to Hawaii. (See Botanical Plate #6, Vol. II) Christie's auction catalogue, June 21, 1977, lists this tapa #159 with other Hawaiian kapa in the Hawaiian section. However, *Art and Artifacts of the Pacific, Africa and the Americas: The James Hooper Collection* by Steven Phelps lists this specimen correctly on page 417, Item 309:

> Ex Saffron Walden Museum, 1945 Tahitian cloth, colored and stamped, made from the bark of the Pauroa Tree, Captain James Roberts 1822.



PART IV

#A-9







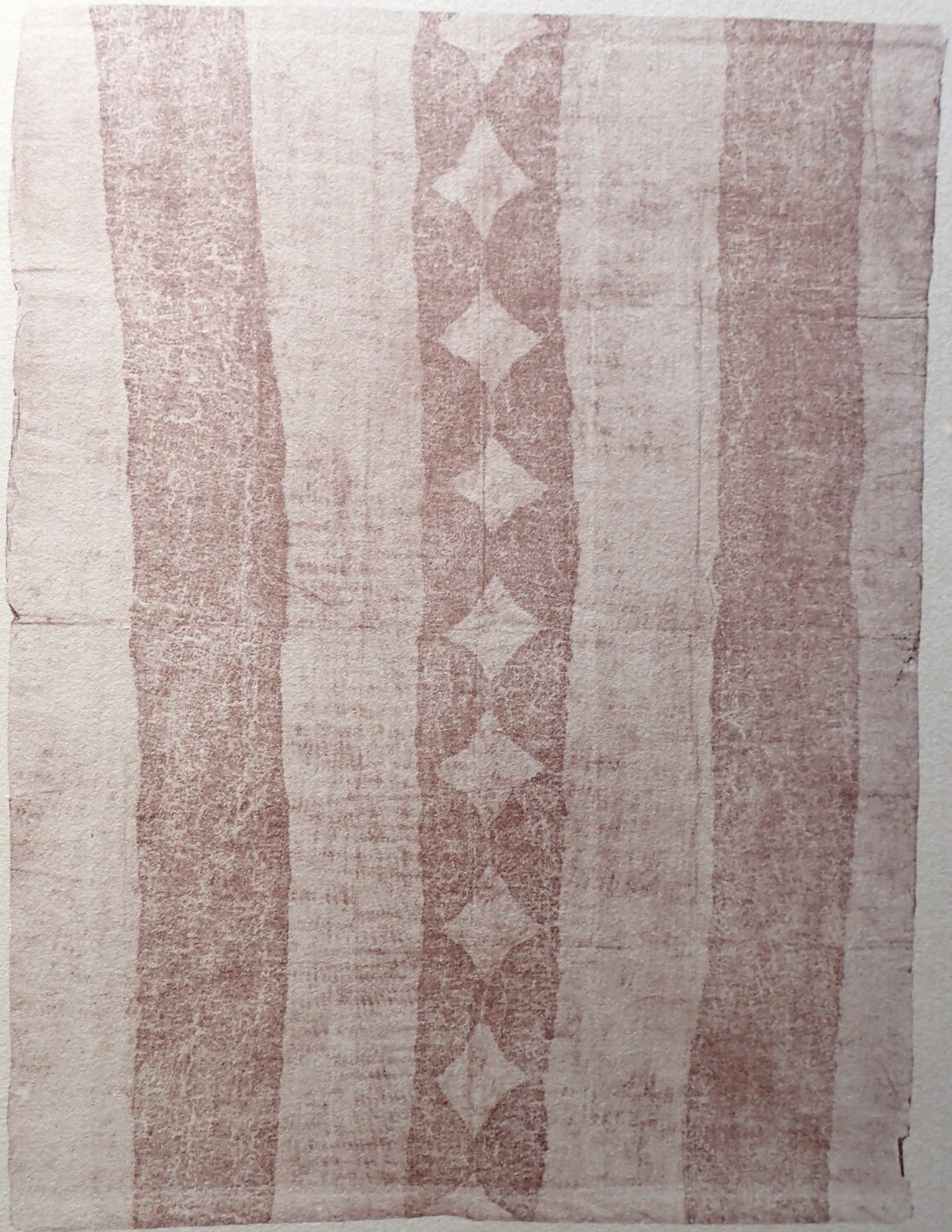


PART V

#A-10

Kapa collected by the Bloxam brothers during the voyage of H.M.S. *Blonde*.
Kapa moi top sheet: light blue on white ground.
279.5cm. x 228.5cm.
Acquired from Rugby School, Warwickshire, 1938.

The Bloxam brothers accompanied Lord Byron on H.M.S. *Blonde* in 1825 when he returned to Hawaii with the bodies of King Kamehameha II (Iolani) and his Queen, Kamamalu, after they had died of infectious diseases in Europe, 1824. Bloxam was chaplain on the ship, and his brother Andrew, the naturalist, accompanied him on the voyage. They kept a journal from which they contributed to a publication (see *Blonde*, 1826) in which they record some of their contacts with the natives: "We remained with them until the 12th, during which time a most friendly intercourse was kept up between us, and many exchanges, purchases and gifts, were made: we, being anxious to possess curious things from the Islands, . . ." (p. 194). Sold as Lot #161 in the Hooper Sale, London, 1977.

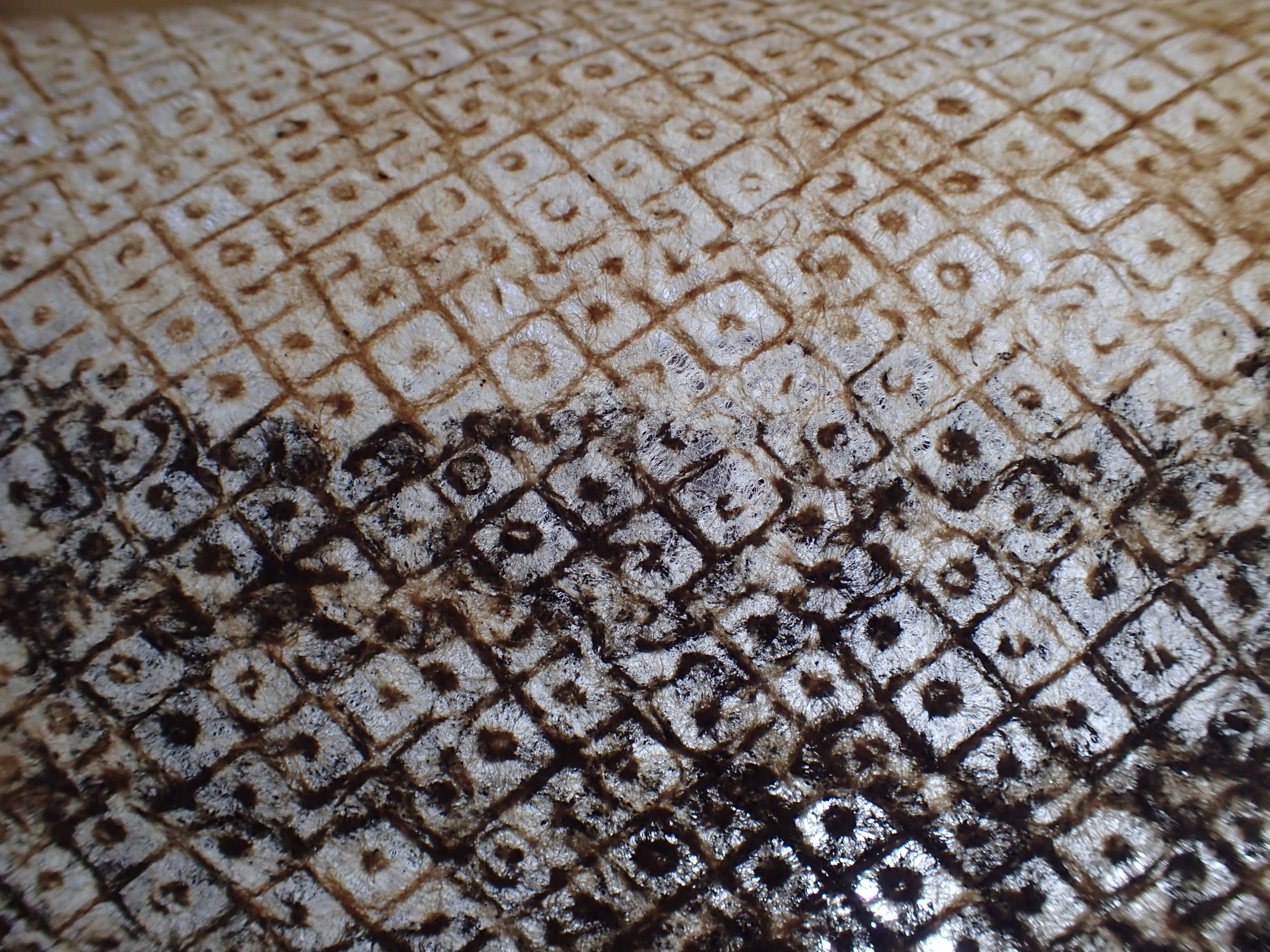


PART V

#A-10









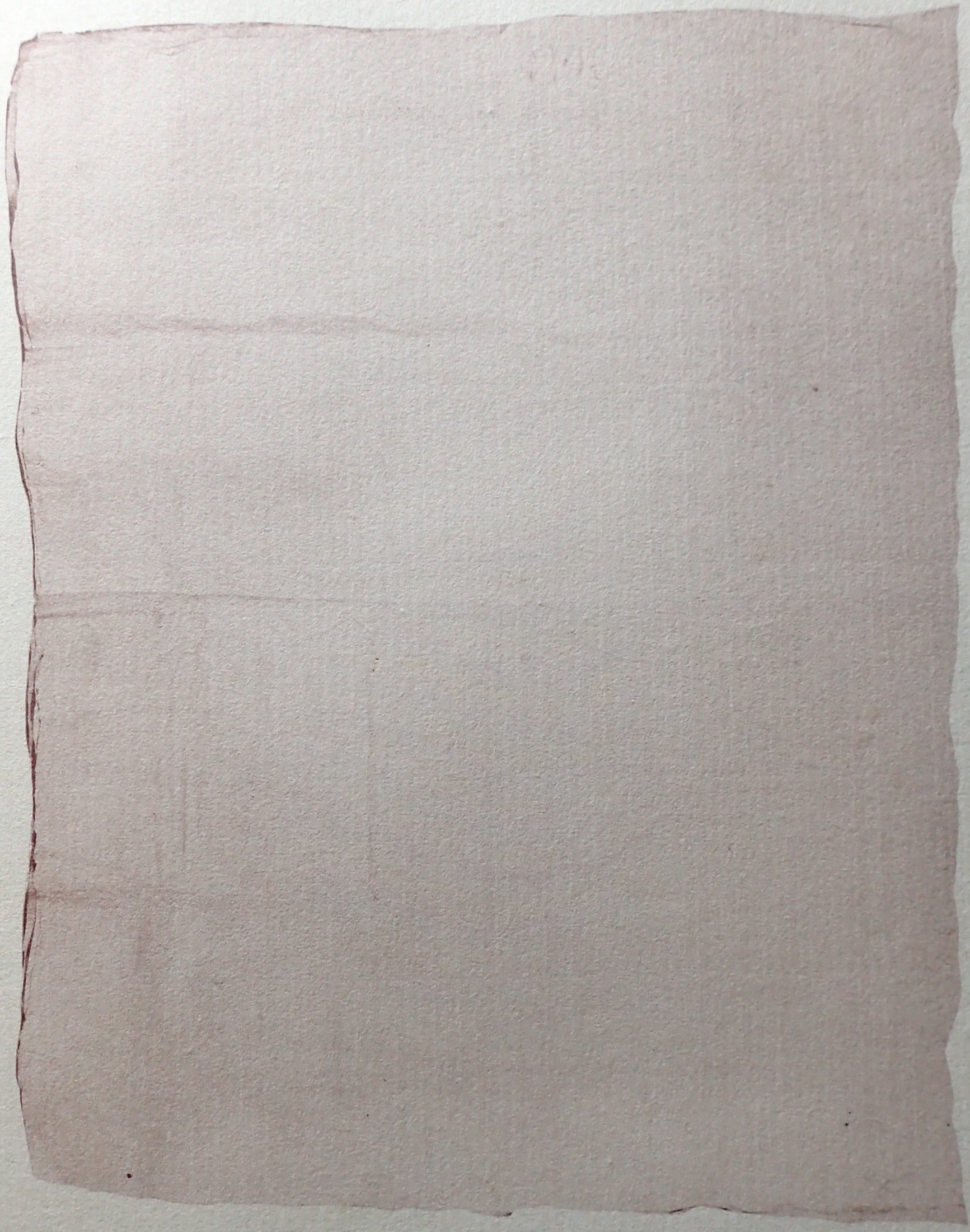
PART V

#A-11

Kapa collected by the Bloxam brothers during the voyage of H.M.S. *Blonde*.

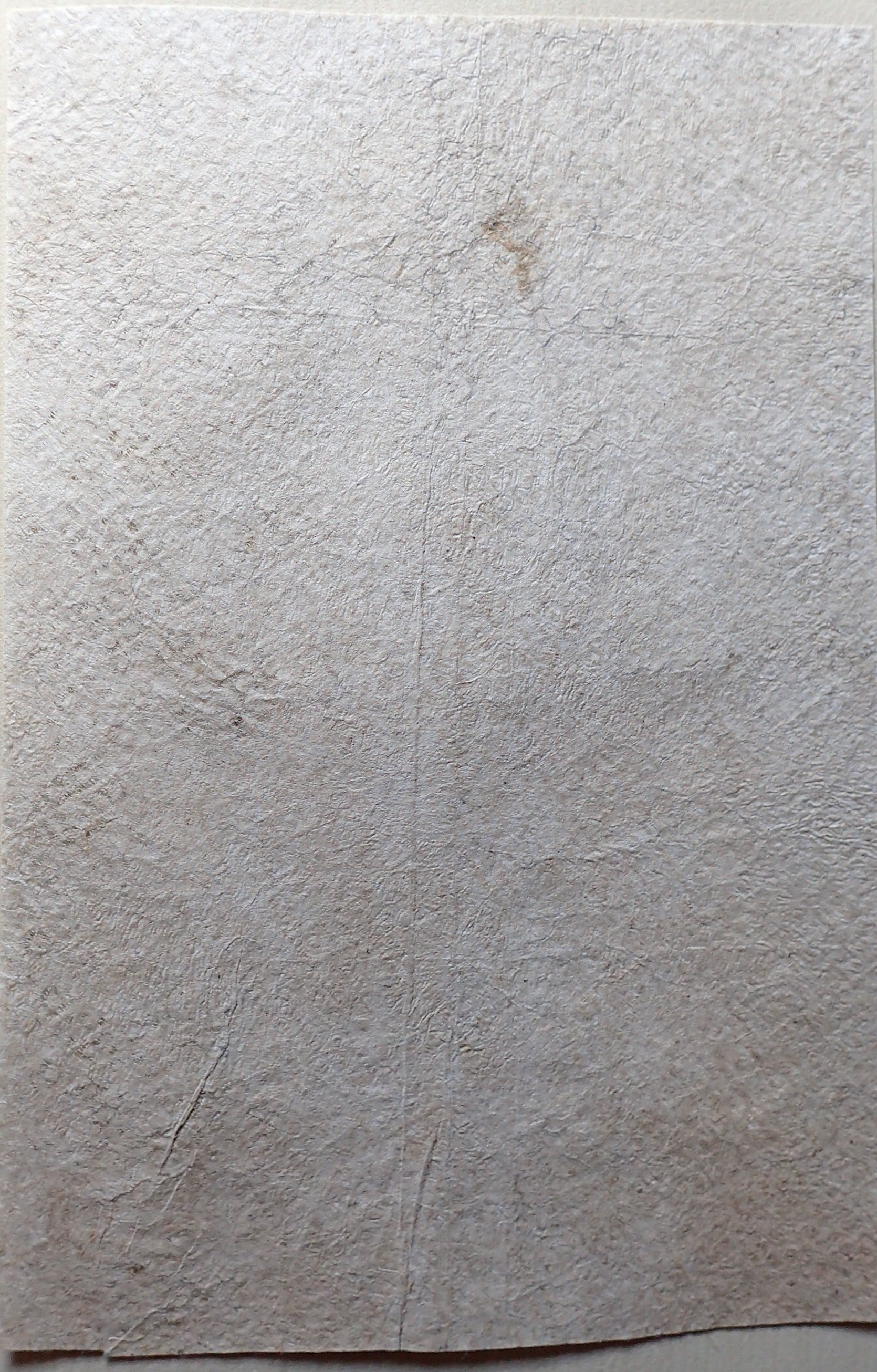
Kapa moi second sheet: white.

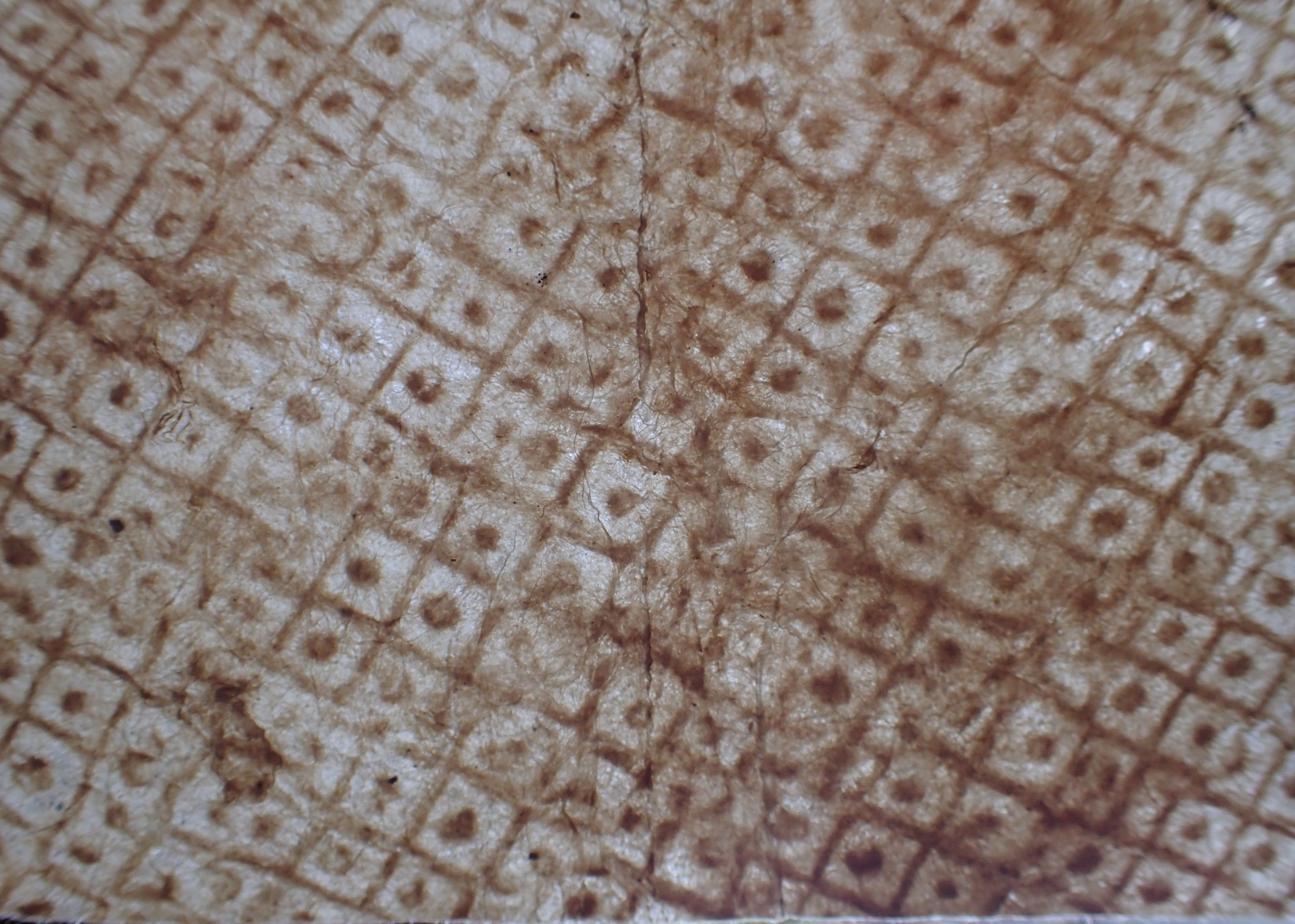
279.5cm. x 228.5cm.



PART V

#A-11





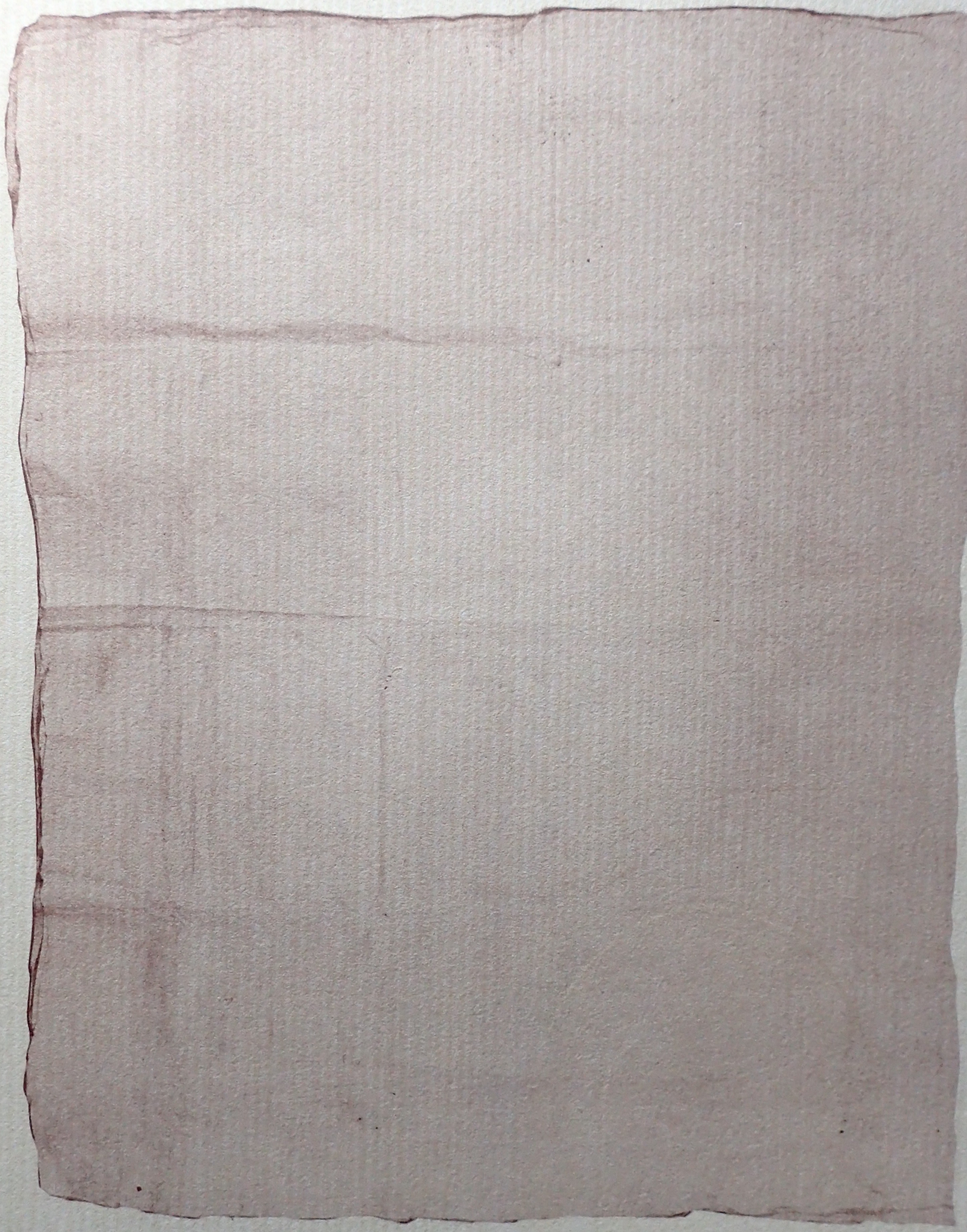
PART V

#A-12

Kapa collected by the Bloxam brothers during the voyage of H.M.S. *Blonde*.

Kapa moi third sheet: white.

279.5cm. x 228.5cm.



PART V

#A-12

PART VI

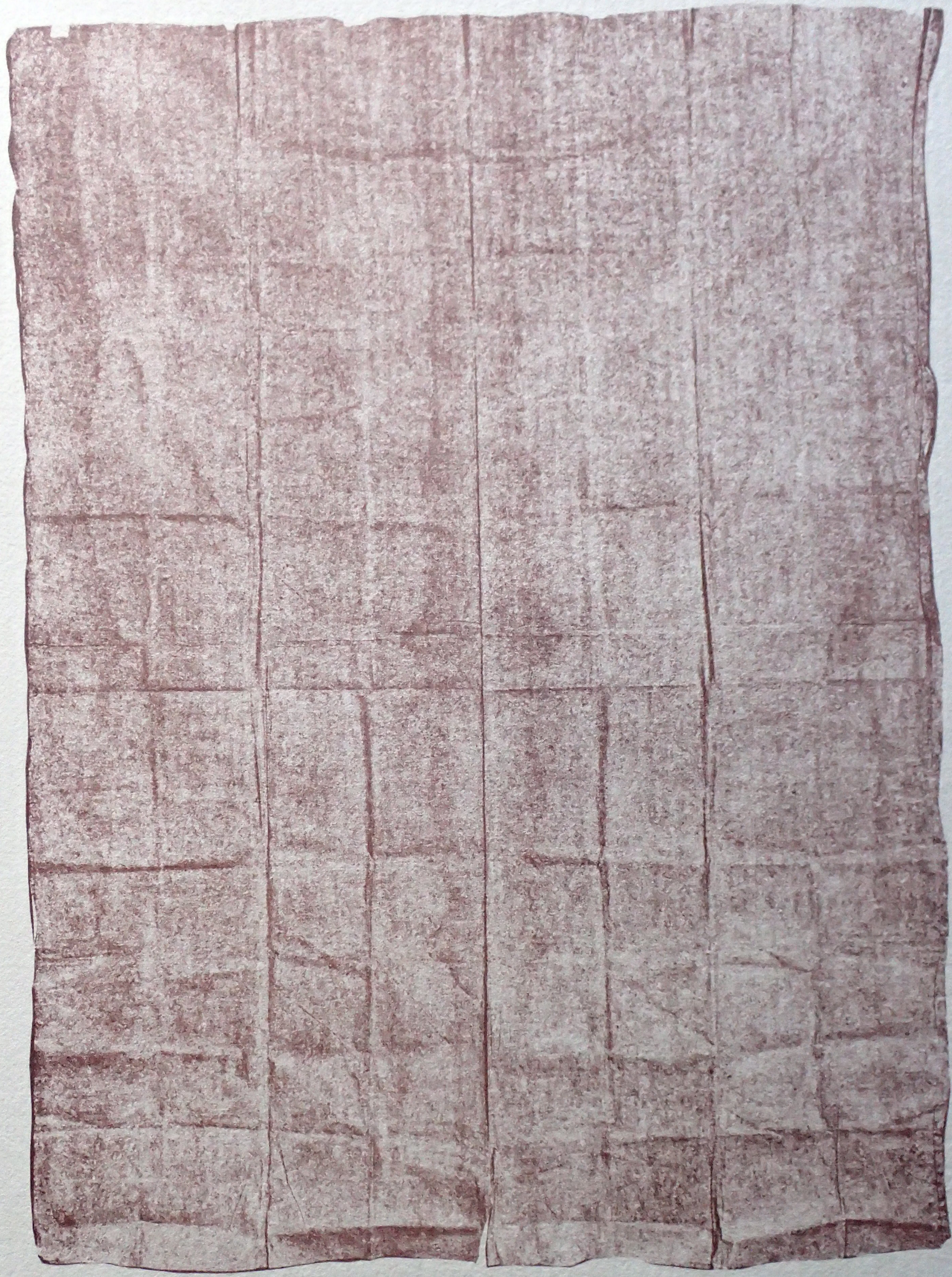
#A-13

Kapa from Mr. & Mrs. A. J. Ostheimer Collection, Honolulu.

Kapa moi top sheet: mottled pink.

247cm. x 209cm.

Provenance undetermined.

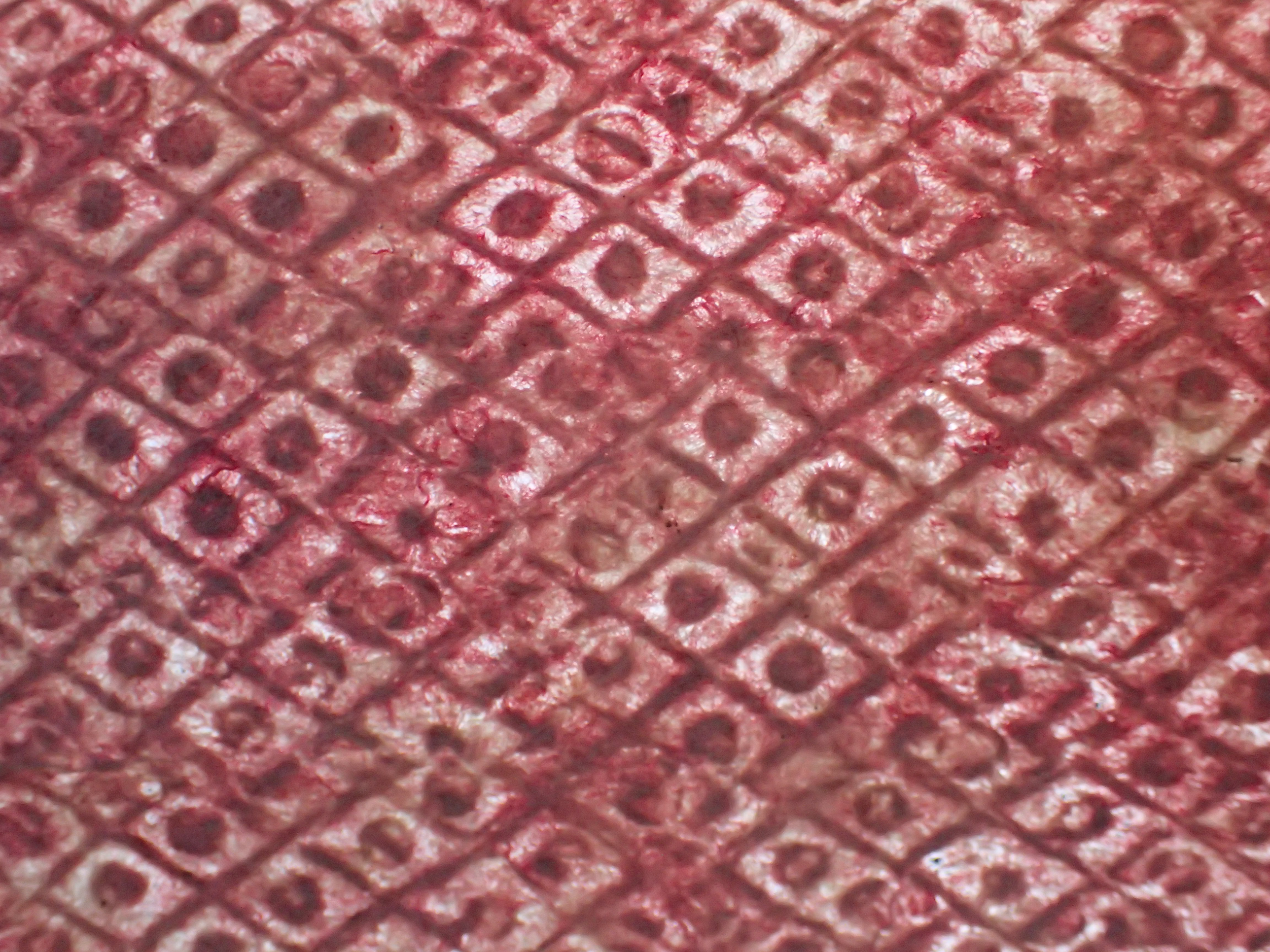


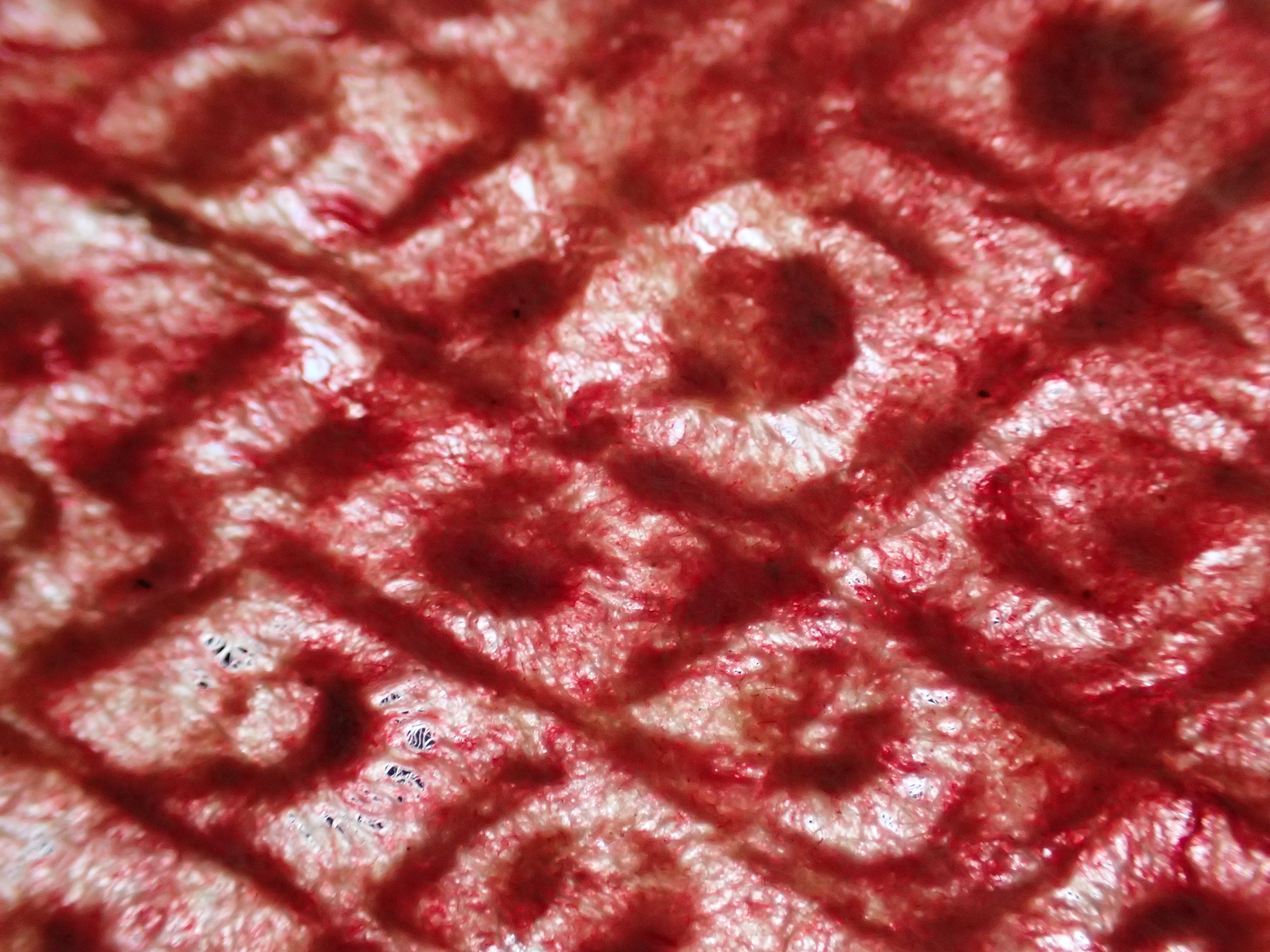
PART VI

#A-13









PART VII

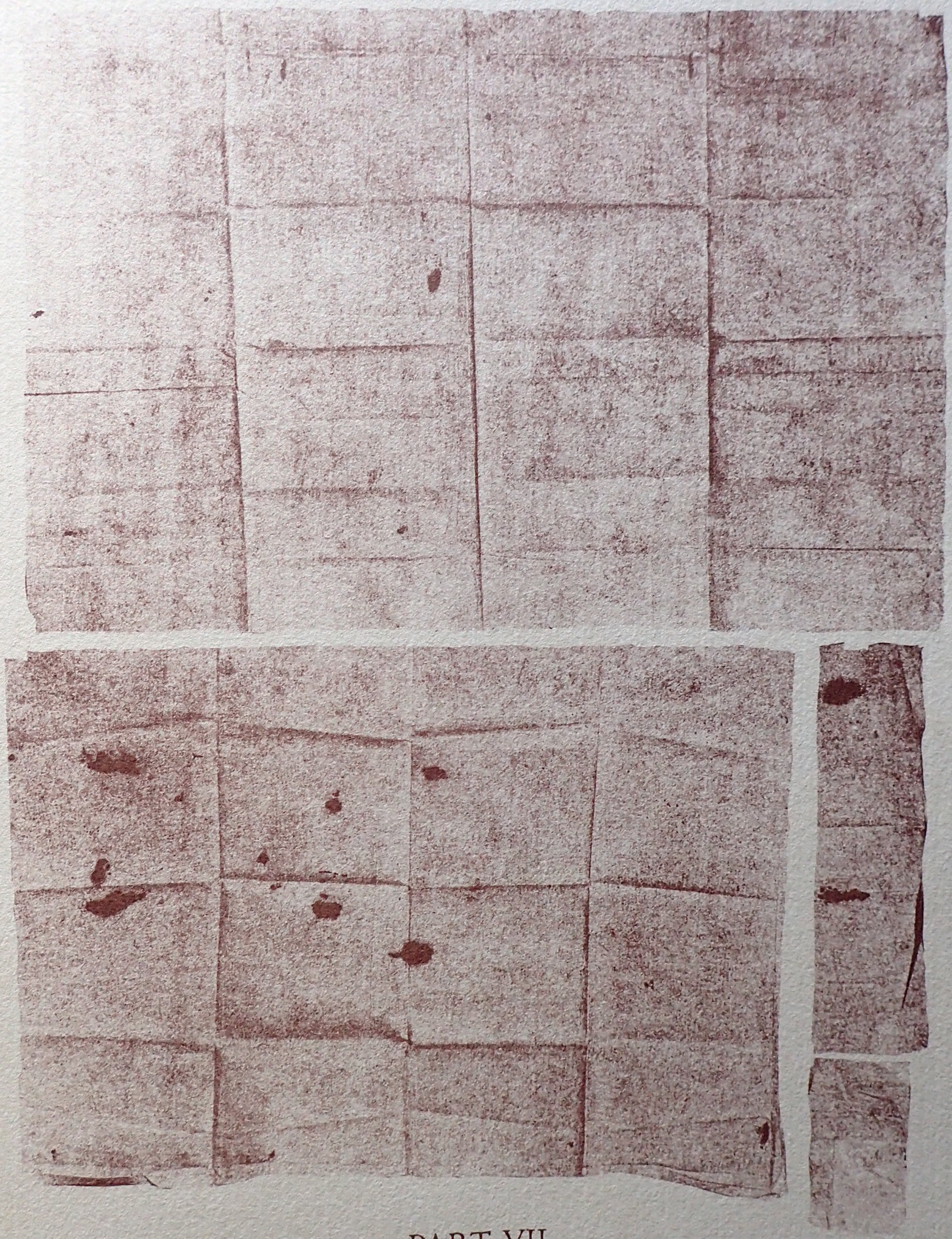
#A-14

Kapa from Watters Mahiole Martin Collection.

Light blue.

Four pieces totaling 151cm. x 166cm.

Provenance: Martin family.



PART VII

#A-14









PART VIII

#A-15

Kapa from Severson Collection, Honolulu.

Kapa moi top sheet: red and blue motif on white ground.

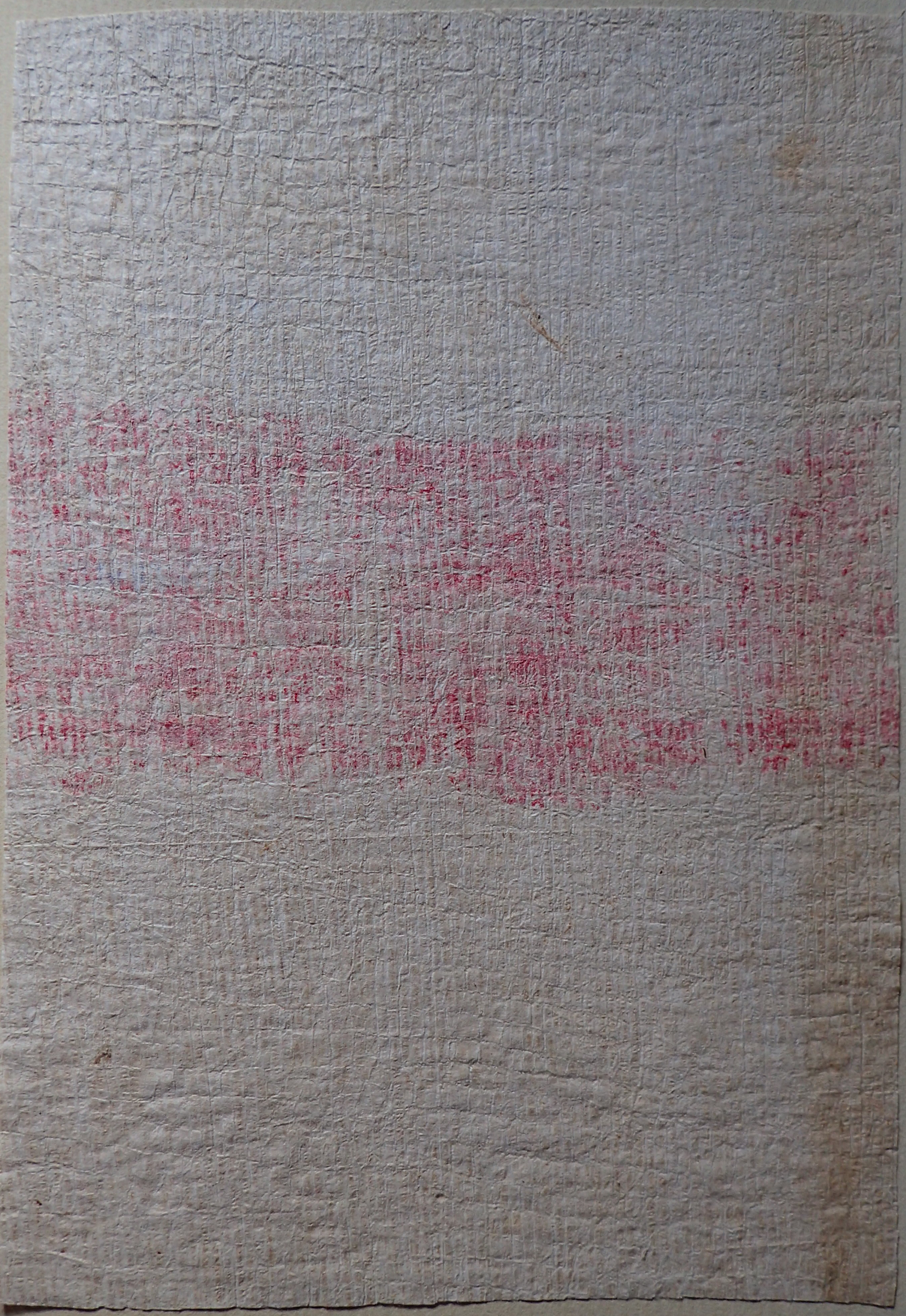
210cm. x 231cm.

Provenance: Kaai family, Kauai.



PART VIII

#A-15





PART VIII

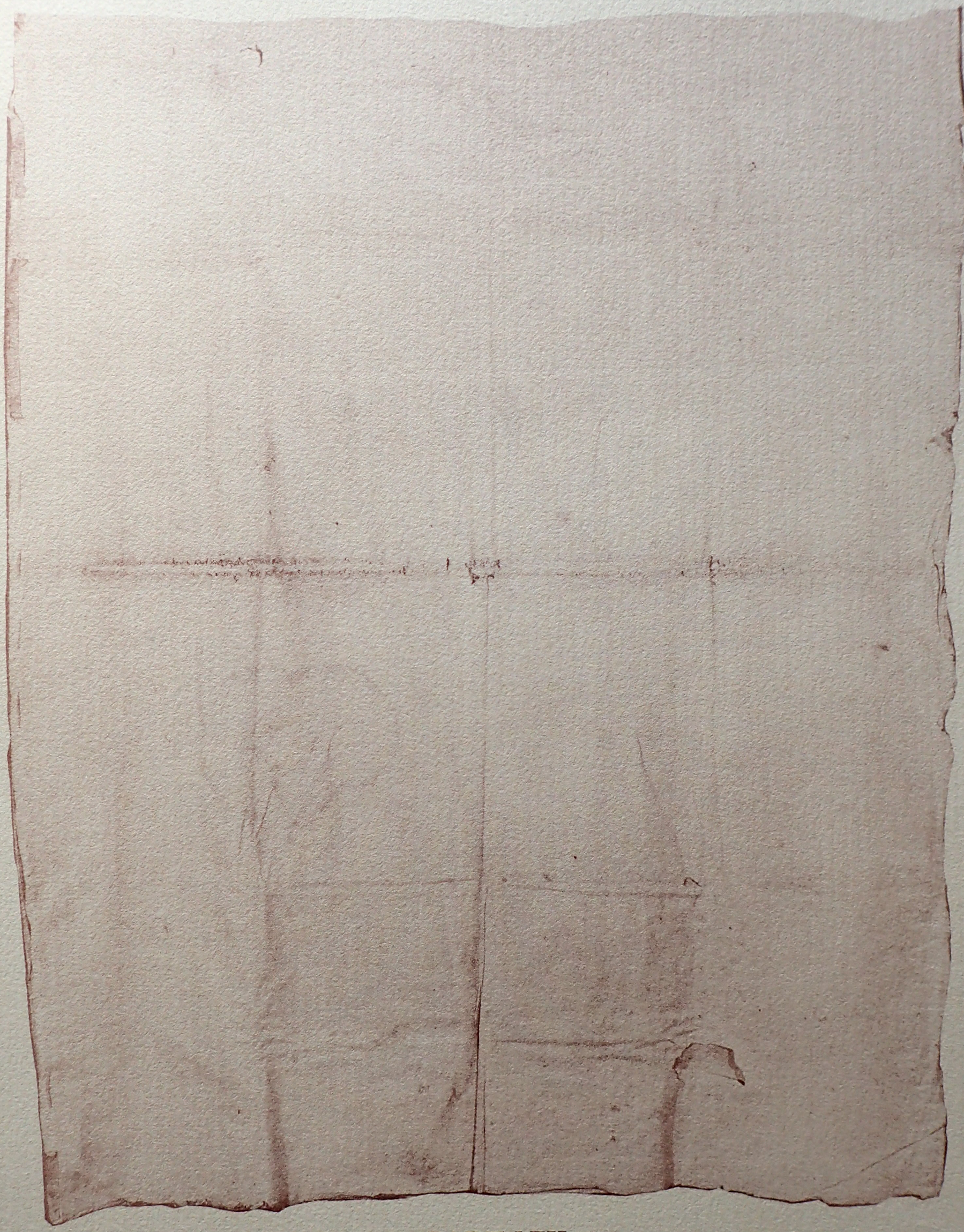
#A-16

Kapa from Severson Collection, Honolulu.

Kapa moi second sheet: white.

210cm. x 231cm.

Provenance: Kaai family, Kauai.



PART VIII

#A-16





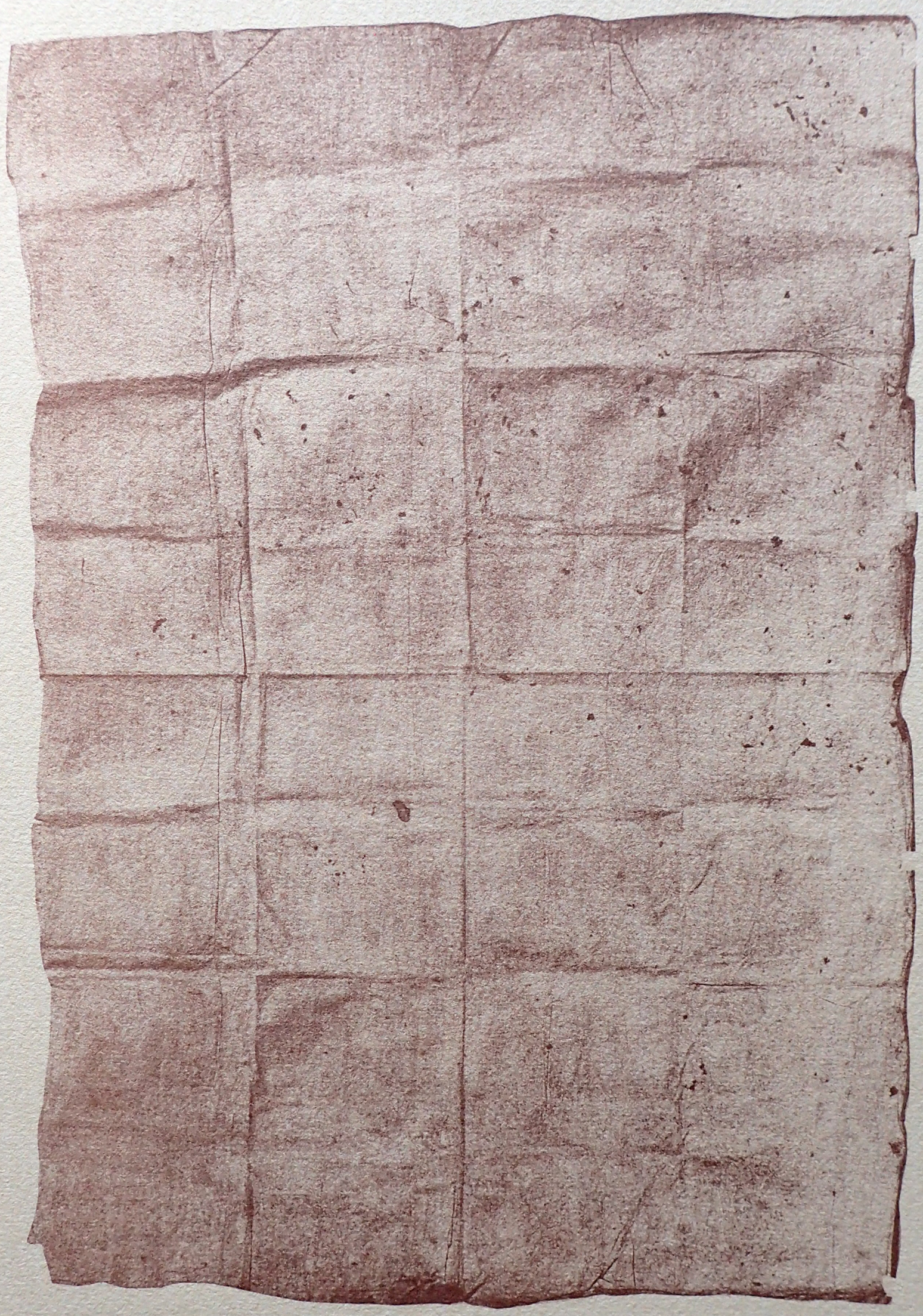
PART VIII

#A-17

Kapa collected by Traphagen, architect, Honolulu, ca. 1880.

Orange.

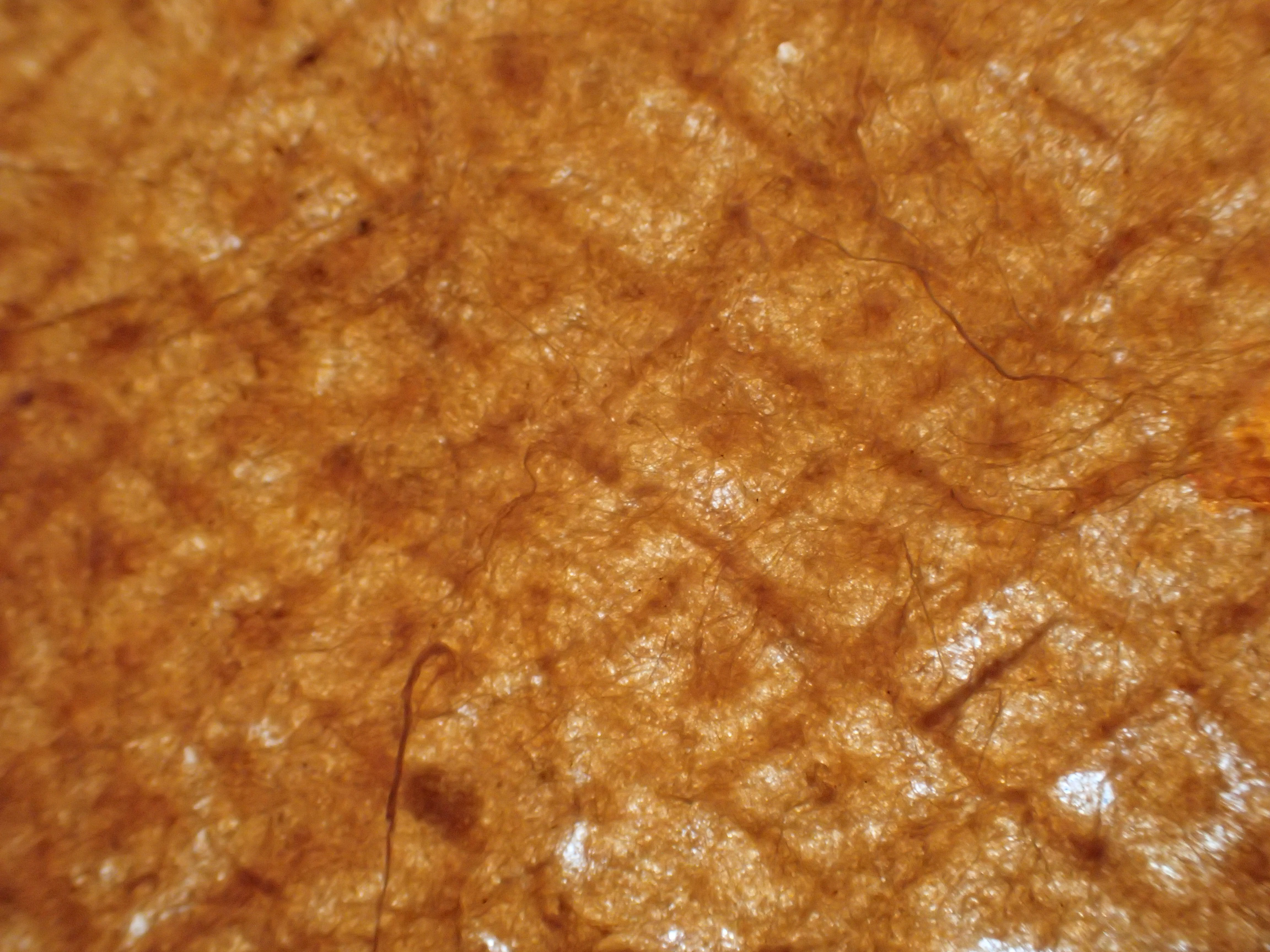
229cm. x 171cm.



PART VIII

#A-17





PART IX

Burial kapa.

Kona Coast, Island of Hawaii.

